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VOL. 1741.

IS HE POPENJOY? BY ANTHONY TROLLOPE
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. 3.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

PARIS: C. REINWALD & C^{IE}, 15, RUE DES SAINTS PÈRES.

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VOL. III.



IS HE POPENJOY?

A NOVEL.

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE AMERICAN SENATOR," "SOUTH AFRICA," ETC.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1878.

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IS HE POPULAR?

A NOVEL

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

WITH

"THE AMERICAN PRINCIPLE" BY JAMES M. COOPER



LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1878

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CONTENTS

O F V O L U M E I I I .

	Page
CHAPTER I. Real Love	7
— II. What the Brotherton Clergymen said about it	15
— III. Lady George at the Deanery	25
— IV. Lady Sarah's Mission	35
— V. "That young Fellow in there"	51
— VI. The Marquis makes a Proposition	62
— VII. "Wouldn't you come here—for a Week?"	76
— VIII. Rudham Park	87
— IX. Guss Mildmay's Success	102
— X. Another Love	118
— XI. Poor Popenjoy!	127
— XII. Jack De Baron's Virtue	138
— XIII. How could he help it?	148
— XIV. Sir Henry said it was the only Thing	163
— XV. Mr. Knox hears again from the Marquis	177
— XVI. Mrs. Jones's Letter	189
— XVII. Back in London	201
— XVIII. The last of the Baroness	215
— XIX. The News comes home	228
— XX. The Will	246
— XXI. Popenjoy is born—and christened	256
— XXII. Conclusion	271

IS HE POPENJOY?

CHAPTER I.

Real Love.

"HE is looking awfully cut up," Mrs. Houghton said to her cousin.

"He is one of the most infernal fools that ever I came across in my life," said Jack.

"I don't see that he is a fool at all—any more than all men are fools. There isn't one among you is ever able to keep his little troubles to himself. You are not a bit wiser than the rest of them yourself."

"I haven't got any troubles—of that sort."

"You haven't a wife—but you'll be forced into having one before long. And when you like another man's wife you can't keep all the world from knowing it."

"All the world may know everything that has taken place between me and Lady George," said Jack. "Of course I like her."

"I should say, rather."

"And so do you."

"No, I don't, sir. I don't like her at all. She is a foolish, meaningless little creature, with nothing

to recommend her but a pretty colour. And she has cut me because her husband will come and pour out his sorrow into my ears. For his sake I used to be good to her."

"I think she is the sweetest human being I ever came across in my life," said Jack, enthusiastically.

"Everybody in London knows that you think so, and that you have told her your thoughts."

"Nobody in London knows anything of the kind. I never said a word to her that her husband mightn't have heard."

"Jack!"

"I never did."

"I wonder you are not ashamed to confess such simplicity, even to me."

"I am not a bit ashamed of that, though I am ashamed of having in some sort contributed to do her an injury. Of course I love her."

"Rather—as I said before."

"Of course you intended that I should."

"I intended that you should amuse yourself. As long as you are good to me, I shall be good to you."

"My dear Adelaide, nobody can be so grateful as I am. But in this matter the thing hasn't gone quite as you intended. You say that she is meaningless."

"Vapid, flabby, childish, and innocent as a baby."

"Innocent I am sure she is. Vapid and flabby she certainly is not. She is full of fun, and is quite as witty as a woman should be."

"You always liked fools, Jack."

"Then how did I come to be so very fond of you?" In answer to this she merely made a grimace at him. "I hadn't known her three days," continued he, "before I began to feel how impossible it would be to say anything to her that ought not to be said."

"That is just like the world all over," said Mrs. Houghton. "When a man really falls in love with a woman he always makes her such a goddess that he doesn't dare to speak to her. The effect is that women are obliged to put up with men who ain't in love with them—either that, or vouchsafe to tell their own little story—when, lo, they are goddesses no longer."

"I daresay it's very ridiculous," said Jack, in a mooning, despondent way. "I daresay I'm not the man I ought to be after the advantages I have had in such friends as you and others."

"If you try to be severe to me, I'll quarrel with you."

"Not severe at all. I'm quite in earnest. A man, and a woman too, have to choose which kind of rôle shall be played. There is innocence and purity combined with going to church and seeing that the children's faces are washed. The game is rather slow, but it lasts a long time, and leads to great capacity for digesting your dinner in old age. You and I haven't gone in for that."

"Do you mean to say that I am not innocent?"

"Then there is the Devil with all his works—which I own are, for the most part, pleasant works to me. I have always had a liking for the Devil."

"Jack!"

"Of all the saints going he is certainly the most popular. It is pleasant to ignore the commandments and enjoy the full liberty of a debauched conscience. But there are attendant evils. It costs money and wears out the constitution."

"I should have thought that you had never felt the latter evil."

"The money goes first, no doubt. This, however, must surely be clear. A man should make up his mind, and not shilly-shally between the two."

"I should have thought you had made up your mind very absolutely."

"I thought so, too, Adelaide, till I knew Lady George Germain. I'll tell you what I feel about her now. If I could have any hope that he would die I would put myself into some reformatory to fit myself to be her second husband."

"Good heavens!"

"That is one idea that I have. Another is to cut his throat, and take my chance with the widow. She is simply the only woman I ever saw that I have liked all round."

"You come and tell me this, knowing what I think of her."

"Why shouldn't I tell you? You don't want me to make love to you?"

"But a woman never cares to hear all these praises of another."

"It was you began it, and if I do speak of her I shall tell the truth. There is a freshness as of uncut flowers about her."

"Psha! Worms and grubs!"

"And when she laughs one dreams of a chaste Venus."

"My heavens, Jack! You should publish all that!"

"The dimples on her cheeks are so alluring that I would give my commission to touch them once with my finger. When I first knew her I thought that the time would come when I might touch them. Now I feel that I would not commit such an outrage to save myself from being cashiered."

"Shall I tell you what you ought to do?"

"Hang myself."

"Just say to her all that you have said to me. You would soon find that her dimples are not more holy than another's."

"You think so."

"Of course I think so. The only thing that puzzles me is that you, Jack De Baron, should be led away to such idolatry. Why should she be different from others? Her father is a money-loving, selfish old reprobate, who was born in a stable. She married the first man that was brought to her, and has never cared for him because he does not laugh, and dance, and enjoy himself after her fashion. I don't suppose she is capable of caring very much for anybody, but she likes you better than anyone else. Have you seen her since the row at Mrs. Jones's?"

"No."

"You have not been, then?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't think she would wish to see me," said Jack. "All that affair must have troubled her."

"I don't know how that is. She has been in town ever since, and he certainly went down to Brotherton. He has come up, I suppose, in consequence of this row between the Dean and his brother. I wonder what really did happen?"

"They say that there was a scuffle and that the parson had very much the best of it. The police were sent for, and all that kind of thing. I suppose the Marquis said something very rough to him."

"Or he to the Marquis, which is rather more likely. Well, good-day, Jack." They were now at the house-door in Berkeley Square. "Don't come in, because Houghton will be here." Then the door was opened. "But take my advice, and go and call in Munster Court at once. And, believe me, when you have found out what one woman is, you have found out what most women are. There are no such great differences."

It was then six o'clock, and he knew that in Munster Court they did not dine till near eight. There was still time with a friend so intimate as he was for what is styled a morning call. The words which his cousin had spoken had not turned him — had not convinced him. Were he again tempted to speak his real mind about this woman — as he had spoken in very truth his real mind — he would still express the same opinion. She was

to him like a running stream to a man who had long bathed in stagnant waters. But the hideous doctrines which his cousin had preached to him were not without their effect. If she were as other women—meaning such women as Adelaide Houghton—or if she were not, why should he not find out the truth? He was well aware that she liked him. She had not scrupled to show him that by many signs. Why should he scruple to say a word that might show him how the wind blew? Then he remembered a few words which he had spoken, but which had been taken so innocently, that they, though they had meant to be mischievous, had become innocent themselves. Even things impure became pure by contact with her. He was sure, quite sure, that the well-known pupil of Satan, his cousin, was altogether wrong in her judgment. He knew that Adelaide Houghton could not recognise, and could not appreciate, a pure woman. But still—still it is so poor a thing to miss your plum because you do not dare to shake the tree! It is especially so, if you are known as a professional stealer of plums!

When he got into Piccadilly, he put himself into a cab, and had himself driven to the corner of Munster Court. It was a little street, gloomy to look at, with dingy doors and small houses, but with windows looking into St. James's Park. There was no way through it, so that he who entered it must either make his way into some house, or come back. He walked up to the door, and then taking out his watch, saw that it was half-past six. It

was almost too late for calling. And then this thing that he intended to do required more thought than he had given it. Would it not be well for him that there should be something holy, even to him, in spite of that Devil's advocate who had been so powerful with him? So he turned, and walking slowly back towards Parliament Street, got into another cab, and was taken to his club. "It has come out," said Major M'Mickmack to him, immediately on his entrance, "that when the Dean went to see Brotherton at the hotel, Brotherton called Lady George all the bad names he could put his tongue to."

"I daresay. He is blackguard enough for anything," said De Baron.

"Then the old Dean took his lordship in his arms, and pitched him bang into the fireplace. I had it all from the police myself."

"I always liked the Dean."

"They say he is as strong as Hercules," continued M'Mickmack. "But he is to lose his deanery."

"Gammon!"

"You just ask any of the fellows that know. Fancy a clergyman pitching a marquis into the fire!"

"Fancy a father not doing so if the marquis spoke ill of his daughter!" said Jack De Baron.

CHAPTER II.

What the Brotherton Clergymen said about it.

HAD Jack knocked at the door and asked for Lady George he certainly would not have seen her. She was enduring at that moment, with almost silent obstinacy, the fierce anger of her indignant husband. "She was sure that it would be bad for her to go to Cross Hall at present, or anywhere among the Germaines, while such things were said of her as the Marquis had said." Could Lord George have declared that the Marquis was at war with the family as he had been at war some weeks since, this argument would have fallen to the ground. But he could not do so, and it seemed to be admitted that by going to Cross Hall she was to take part against her father, and so far to take part with the Marquis, who had maligned her. This became her strong point, and as Lord George was not strong in argument, he allowed her to make the most of it. "Surely you wouldn't let me go anywhere," she said, "where such names as that are believed against me?" She had not heard the name, nor had he, and they were in the dark; but she had pleaded her cause well, and appealed again and again to her husband's promise to take her to the Deanery. His stronghold was that of marital

authority—authority unbounded, legitimate, and not to be questioned. “But if you commanded me to quarrel with papa?” she asked.

“I have commanded nothing of the kind.”

“But if you did?”

“Then you must quarrel with him.”

“I couldn’t—and I wouldn’t,” said she, burying her face upon the arm of the sofa.

At any rate, on the next morning she didn’t go, nor, indeed, did he come to fetch her, so convinced had he been of the persistency of her obstinacy. But he told her as he left her that if she separated herself from him now, then the separation must be lasting. Her father, however, foreseeing this threat, had told her just the reverse. “He is an obstinate man,” the Dean had said, “but he is good and conscientious, and he loves you.”

“I hope he loves me.”

“I am sure he does. He is not a fickle man. At present he has put himself into his brother’s hands, and we must wait till the tide turns. He will learn by degrees to know how unjust he has been.”

So it came to pass that Lord George went down to Cross Hall in the morning, and that Mary accompanied her father to the Deanery the same afternoon. The Dean had already learned that it would be well that he should face his clerical enemies as soon as possible. He had already received a letter worded in friendly terms from the bishop, asking him whether he would not wish to make some statement as to the occurrence at Scum-

berg's Hotel which might be made known to the clergymen of the cathedral. He had replied by saying that he wished to make no such statement, but that on his return to Brotherton he would be very willing to tell the bishop the whole story if the bishop wished to hear it. He had been conscious of Mr. Groschut's hand even among the civil phrases which had come from the bishop himself. "In such a matter," he said in his reply, "I am amenable to the laws of the land, and am not, as I take it, amenable to any other authority." Then he went on to say that for his own satisfaction he should be very glad to tell the story to the bishop.

The story as it reached Brotherton had, no doubt, given rise to a great deal of scandal and a great deal of amusement. Pountner and Holdenough were to some extent ashamed of their bellicose Dean. There is something ill-mannered, ungentlemanlike, what we now call rowdy, in personal encounters, even among laymen—and this is of course aggravated when the assailant is a clergyman. And these canons, though they kept up pleasant social relations with the Dean, were not ill-disposed to make use of so excellent a weapon against a man, who, though coming from a lower order than themselves, was never disposed in any way to yield to them. But the two canons were gentlemen, and as gentlemen were gracious. Though they liked to have the Dean on the hip, they did not want to hurt him sorely when they had gotten him there. They would be contented with certain sly allusions, and only half-expressed triumphs. But Mr. Groschut was con-

firmed in his opinion that the Dean was altogether unfit for his position, which, for the interests of the Church, should be filled by some such man as Mr. Groschut himself—by some Godfearing clergyman, not known as a hard rider across country and as a bruiser with his fists. There had been an article in *The Brotherton Church Gazette*, in which an anxious hope was expressed that some explanation would be given of the very incredible tidings which had unfortunately reached Brotherton. Then Mr. Groschut had spoken a word in season to the bishop. Of course, he said, it could not be true; but would it not be well that the Dean should be invited to make his own statement? It was indeed Mr. Groschut himself who had used the word “incredible” in the article. Mr. Groschut, in speaking to the bishop, said that the tidings must be untrue. And yet he believed, and rejoiced in believing, every word of them. He was a pious man, and did not know that he was lying. He was an anxious Christian, and did not know that he was doing his best to injure an enemy behind his back. He hated the Dean; but he thought that he loved him. He was sure that the Dean would go to some unpleasant place, and gloried in the certainty; but he thought that he was most anxious for the salvation of the Dean’s soul. “I think your lordship owes it to him to offer him the opportunity,” said Mr. Groschut.

The bishop, too, was what we call a severe man, but his severity was used chiefly against himself. He was severe in his principles; but, knowing the world better than his chaplain, was aware how much

latitude it was necessary that he should allow in dealing with men. And in his heart of hearts he had a liking for the Dean. Whenever there were any tiffs the Dean could take a blow and give a blow, and then think no more about it. This, which was a virtue in the eyes of the bishop, was no virtue at all to Mr. Groschut, who hated to be hit himself, and wished to think that his own blows were fatal. In urging the matter with the bishop, Mr. Groschut expressed an opinion that, if this story were unfortunately true, the Dean should cease to be Dean. He thought that the Dean must see this himself. "I am given to understand that he was absolutely in custody of the police," said Mr. Groschut. The Bishop was annoyed by his chaplain, but still he wrote the letter.

On the very morning of his arrival in Brother-ton the Dean went to the Palace. "Well, my lord," said the Dean, "you have heard this cock-and-bull story."

"I have heard a story," said the Bishop. He was an old man, very tall and very thin, looking as though he had crushed out of himself all taste for the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, but singularly urbane in his manner, with an old-fashioned politeness. He smiled as he invited the Dean to a seat, and then expressed a hope that nobody had been much hurt. "Very serious injuries have been spoken of here, but I know well how rumour magnifies these things."

"Had I killed him, my lord, I should have been neither more nor less to blame than I am now, for

I certainly endeavoured to do my worst to him." The Bishop's face assumed a look of pain and wonder. "When I had the miscreant in my hands I did not pause to measure the weight of my indignation. He told me, me a father, that my child was——" He had risen from his chair, and as he pronounced the word, stood looking into the Bishop's eyes. "If there be purity on earth, sweet feminine modesty, playfulness devoid of guile, absolute freedom from any stain of leprosy, they are to be found with my girl."

"Yes, yes; I am sure of that."

"She is my worldly treasure. I have none other. I desire none other. I had wounded this man by certain steps which I have taken in reference to his family—and then, that he might wound me in return, he did not scruple to use that word to his own sister-in-law, to my daughter. Was that a time to consider whether a clergyman may be justified in putting out his strength! No, my lord. Old as you are you would have attempted it yourself. I took him up and smote him, and it is not my fault if he is not a cripple for life." The Bishop gazed at him speechlessly, but felt quite sure that it was not in his power to rebuke his fellow-clergyman. "Now, my lord," continued the Dean, "you have heard the story. I tell it to you, and I shall tell it to no one else. I tell it you, not because you are the bishop of this diocese, and I the Dean of this cathedral—and as such, I am in such a matter by no means subject to your lordship's authority—but, because of all my neighbours you are the most respected, and

I would wish that the truth should be known to someone." Then he ceased, neither enjoining secrecy, nor expressing any wish that the story should be correctly told to others.

"He must be a cruel man," said the Bishop.

"No, my lord—he is no man at all. He is a degraded animal, unfortunately placed almost above penalties by his wealth and rank. I am glad to think that he has at last encountered some little punishment, though I could wish that the use of the scourge had fallen into other hands than mine." Then he took his leave, and as he went the Bishop was very gracious to him.

"I am almost inclined to think he was justified," said the Bishop to Mr. Groschut.

"Justified, my lord! The Dean—in striking the Marquis of Brotherton, and then falling into the hands of the police!"

"I know nothing about the police."

"May I ask your lordship what was his account of the transaction?"

"I cannot give it you. I simply say that I think that he was justified." Then Mr. Groschut expressed his opinion to Mrs. Groschut that the Bishop was getting old—very old indeed. Mr. Groschut was almost afraid that no good could be done in the diocese till a firmer and a younger man sat in the seat.

The main facts of the story came to the knowledge of the canons, though I doubt whether the Bishop ever told all that was told to him. Some few hard words were said. Canon Pountner made a

remark in the Dean's hearing about the Church militant, which drew forth from the Dean an allusion to the rites of Bacchus, which the canon only half-understood. And Dr. Holdenough asked the Dean whether there had not been some little trouble between him and the Marquis. "I am afraid you have been a little hard upon my noble brother-in-law," said the Doctor. To which the Dean replied that the Doctor should teach his noble brother-in-law better manners. But, upon the whole, the Dean held his own well, and was as carefully waited upon to his seat by the vergers as though there had been no scene at Scumberg's Hotel.

For a time no doubt there was a hope on the part of Mr. Groschut and his adherents that there would be some further police interference; that the Marquis would bring an action, or that the magistrate would demand some inquiry. But nothing was done. The Marquis endured his bruised back at any rate in silence. But there came tidings to Brotherton that his lordship would not again be seen at Manor Cross that year. The house had been kept up as though for him, and he had certainly declared his purpose of returning when he left the place. He had indeed spoken of living there almost to the end of autumn. But early in July it became known that when he left Scumberg's Hotel, he would go abroad—and before the middle of July it was intimated to Lady Alice, and through her to all Brotherton, that the Dowager, with her daughters and Lord George, were going back to the old house.

In the meantime Lady George was still at the Deanery, and Lord George at Cross Hall, and to the eyes of the world the husband had been separated from his wife. His anger was certainly very deep, especially against his wife's father. The fact that his commands had been twice—nay, as he said, thrice—disobeyed rankled in his mind. He had ordered her not to waltz, and she had waltzed with, as Lord George thought, the most objectionable man in all London. He had ordered her to leave town with him immediately after Mrs. Jones's ball, and she had remained in town. He had ordered her now to leave her father and to cleave to him; but she had claved to her father and had deserted him. What husband can do other than repudiate his wife under such circumstances as these! He was moody, gloomy, silent, never speaking of her, never going into Brotherton lest by chance he should see her; but always thinking of her—and always, always longing for her company.

She talked of him daily to her father, and was constant in her prayer that they should not be made to quarrel. Having so long doubted whether she could ever love him, she now could not understand the strength of her own feeling. "Papa, mightn't I write to him?" she said. But her father thought that she should not herself take the first step, at any rate, till the Marquis was gone. It was she who had, in fact, been injured, and the overture should come from the other side. Then at last, in a low whisper, hiding her face, she told her father a great secret, adding, with a voice a little raised: "Now, papa, I must write to him."

"My darling, my dearest," said the Dean, leaning over and kissing her with more than his usual demonstration of love.

"I may write now?"

"Yes, dear, you should certainly tell him that."

Then the Dean went out and walked round the Deanery garden, and the Cathedral cloisters, and the Close, assuring himself that after a very little while the real Lord Popenjoy would be his own grandson.

CHAPTER III.

Lady George at the Deanery.

It took Mary a long, long morning—not altogether an unhappy morning—to write her letter to her husband. She was forced to make many attempts before she could tell the great news in a fitting way, and even when the telling was done she was very far from being satisfied with the manner of it. There should have been no necessity that such tidings should be told by letter. It was cruel, very cruel, that such a moment should not have been made happy to her by his joy. The whisper made to her father should have been made to him—but that things had gone so untowardly with her. And then, in her present circumstances, she could not devote her letter to the one event. She must refer to the said subject of their separation. “Dear, dearest George, pray do not think of quarrelling with me,” she said twice over in her letter. The letter did get itself finished at last, and the groom was sent over with it on horseback.

What answer would he make to her? Would he be very happy? Would he be happy enough to forgive her at once and come and stay with her at the Deanery? or would the importance of the moment make him more imperious than ever in

commanding that she should go with him to Cross Hall. If he did command her now she thought that she must go. Then she sat meditating what would be the circumstances of her life there—how absolutely she would be trodden upon; how powerless she would be to resist those Dorcas conclaves after her mutiny and subsequent submission! Though she could not quite guess, she could nearly guess what bad things had been said of her; and the ladies at Cross Hall were, as she understood, now in amity with him who had said them. They had believed evil of her, and of course, therefore, in going to Cross Hall, she would go to it as to a reformatory. But the Deanery would be to her a paradise if only her husband would but come to her there. It was not only that she was mistress of everything, including her own time, but that her father's infinite tenderness made all things soft and sweet to her. She hated to be scolded, and the slightest roughness of word or tone seemed to her to convey a rebuke. But he was never rough. She loved to be caressed by those who were dear and near and close to her, and his manner was always caressing. She often loved, if the truth is to be spoken, to be idle, and to spend hours with an unread book in her hand under the shade of the Deanery trees, and among the flowers of the Deanery garden. The Dean never questioned her as to those idle hours. But at Cross Hall not a half-hour would be allowed to pass without inquiry as to its purpose. At Cross Hall there would be no novels—except those of Miss Edgeworth, which were

sickening to her. She might have all Mudie down to the Deanery if she chose to ask for it. At Cross Hall she would be driven out with the Dowager, Lady Susanna, and Lady Amelia, for two hours daily, and would have to get out of the carriage at every cottage she came to. At the Deanery there was a pair of ponies, and it was her great delight to drive her father about the roads outside the city. She sometimes thought that a long sojourn at Cross Hall would kill her. Would he not be kind to her now, and loving, and would he not come and stay with her for one or two happy weeks in her father's house? If so, how dearly she would love him; how good she would be to him; how she would strive to gratify him in all his whims! Then she thought of Adelaide Houghton and the letter; and she thought also of those subsequent visits to Berkeley Square. But still she did not in the least believe that he cared for Adelaide Houghton. It was impossible that he should like a painted, unreal, helmeted creature, who smelt of oils, and was never unaffected for a moment. At any rate, she would never, never throw Adelaide Houghton in his teeth. If she had been imprudent, so had he; and she would teach him how small errors ought to be forgiven. But would he come to her, or would he only write? Surely he would come to her now when there was matter of such vital moment to be discussed between them! Surely there would be little directions given to her, which should be obeyed—oh, with such care!—if he would be good to her.

That pernicious groom must have ridden home along the road nearly as quick as the Dean's cob would carry him for the express purpose of saying that there was no message. When he had been about ten minutes in the Cross Hall kitchen, he was told that there was no message, and had trotted off with most unnecessary speed. Mary was with her father when word was brought to him, saying that there was no message. "Oh papa, he doesn't care!" she said.

"He will be sure to write," said the Dean, "and he would not allow himself to write in a hurry."

"But why doesn't he come?"

"He ought to come."

"Oh papa—if he doesn't care, I shall die."

"Men always care very much."

"But if he had made up his mind to quarrel with me forever, then he won't care. Why didn't he send his love?"

"He wouldn't do that by the groom."

"I'd send him mine by a chimney-sweep if there were nobody else." Then the door was opened, and in half a second she was in her husband's arms. "Oh George, my darling, my own, I am so happy. I thought you would come. Oh my dear!" Then the Dean crept out without a word, and the husband and the wife were together for hours.

"Do you think she is well," said Lord George to the Dean in the course of the afternoon.

"Well? why shouldn't she be well?"

"In this condition I take it one never quite knows."

"I should say there isn't a young woman in England in better general health. I never knew her to be ill in my life since she had the measles."

"I thought she seemed flushed."

"No doubt—at seeing you."

"I suppose she ought to see the doctor."

"See a fiddlestick. If she's not fretted she won't want a doctor till the time comes when the doctor will be with her whether she wants him or not. There's nothing so bad as coddling. Everybody knows that now. The great thing is to make her happy."

There came a cloud across Lord George's brow as this was said—a cloud which he could not control, though, as he had hurried across the park on horseback, he had made up his mind to be happy and good-humoured. He certainly had cared very much. He had spoken no word on the subject to anyone, but he had been very much disappointed when he had been married twelve months and no hope of an heir had as yet been vouchsafed to him. When his brother had alluded to the matter, he had rebuked even his brother. He had never ventured to ask a question even of his wife. But he had been himself aware of his own bitter disappointment. The reading of his wife's letter had given him a feeling of joy keener than any he had before felt. For a moment he had been almost triumphant. Of course he would go to her. That distasteful Popenjoy up in London was sick and ailing; and after all this might be the true Popenjoy

who, in coming days, would re-establish the glory of the family. But, at any rate, she was his wife, and the bairn would be his bairn. He had been made a happy man, and had determined to enjoy to the full the first blush of his happiness. But when he was told that she was not to be fretted, that she was to be made especially happy, and was so told by her father, he did not quite clearly see his way for the future. Did this mean that he was to give up everything, that he was to confess tacitly that he had been wrong in even asking his wife to go with him to Cross Hall, and that he was to be reconciled in all things to the Dean? He was quite ready to take his wife back, to abstain from accusations against her, to let her be one of the family, but he was as eager as ever to repudiate the Dean. To the eyes of his mother the Dean was now the most horrible of human beings, and her eldest born the dearest of sons. After all that he had endured he was again going to let her live at the old family house, and all those doubts about Popenjoy had, she thought, been fully satisfied. The Marquis to her thinking was now almost a model Marquis, and this dear son, this excellent head of the family, had been nearly murdered by the truculent Dean. Of course the Dean was spoken of at Cross Hall in very bitter terms, and of course those terms made impression on Lord George. In the first moments of his paternal anxiety he had been willing to encounter the Dean in order that he might see his wife; but he did not like to be told by the Dean that his wife ought to be made happy. "I don't

know what there is to make her unhappy," he said, "if she will do her duty."

"That she has always done," said the Dean, "both before her marriage and since."

"I suppose she will come home now," said Lord George.

"I hardly know what home means. Your own home, I take it, is in Munster Court."

"My own home is at Manor Cross," said Lord George, proudly.

"While that is the residence of Lord Brotherton it is absolutely impossible that she should go there. Would you take her to the house of a man who has scurrilously maligned her as he has done?"

"He is not there or likely to be there. Of course she would come to Cross Hall first."

"Do you think that would be wise? You were speaking just now with anxiety as to her condition."

"Of course I am anxious."

"You ought to be at any rate. Do you think that as she is now she should be subjected to the cold kindnesses of the ladies of your family?"

"What right have you to call their kindness cold?"

"Ask yourself. You hear what they say. I do not. You must know exactly what has been the effect in your mother's house of the scene between me and your brother at that hotel. I spurned him from me with violence because he had maligned your wife. I may expect you to forgive me."

"It was very unfortunate."

"I may feel sure that you as a man must ex-

onerate me from blame in that matter, but I cannot expect your mother to see it in the same light. I ask you whether they do not regard her as wayward and unmanageable?"

He paused for a reply; and Lord George found himself obliged to say something. "She should come and show that she is not wayward or unmanageable."

"But she would be so to them. Without meaning it they would torment her, and she would be miserable. Do you not know that it would be so?" He almost seemed to yield. "If you wish her to be happy, come here for awhile. If you will stay here with us for a month, so that this stupid idea of a quarrel shall be wiped out of people's minds, I will undertake that she shall then go to Cross Hall. To Manor Cross she cannot go while the Marquis is its ostensible master."

Lord George was very far from being prepared to yield in this way. He had thought that his wife in her present condition would have been sure to obey him, and had even ventured to hope that the Dean would make no further objection. "I don't think that this is the place for her," he said. "Wherever I am she should be with me."

"Then come here, and it will be all right," said the Dean.

"I don't think that I can do that."

"If you are anxious for her health you will." A few minutes ago the Dean had been very stout in his assurances that everything was well with his daughter; but he was by no means unwilling to take

advantage of her interesting situation to forward his own views. "I certainly cannot say that she ought to go to Cross Hall at present. She would be wretched there. Ask yourself."

"Why should she be wretched?"

"Ask yourself. You had promised her that you would come here. Does not the very fact of your declining to keep that promise declare that you are dissatisfied with her conduct, and with mine?" Lord George was dissatisfied with his wife's conduct and with the Dean's, but at the present moment did not wish to say so. "I maintain that her conduct is altogether irreproachable; and as for my own, I feel that I am entitled to your warmest thanks for what I have done. I must desire you to understand that we will neither of us submit to blame."

Nothing had been arranged when Lord George left the Deanery. The husband could not bring himself to say a harsh word to his wife. When she begged him to promise that he would come over to the Deanery, he shook his head. Then she shed a tear, but as she did it she kissed him, and he could not answer her love by any rough word. So he rode back to Cross Hall, feeling that the difficulties of his position were almost insuperable.

On the next morning Mr. Price came to him. Mr. Price was the farmer who had formerly lived at Cross Hall, who had given his house up to the Dowager, and who had in consequence been told that he must quit the land at the expiration of his present term. "So, my lord, his lordship ain't going to stay very long after all," said Mr. Price.

"I don't quite know as yet," said Lord George.

"I have had Mr. Knox with me this morning, saying that I may go back to the Hall whenever I please. He took me so much by surprise, I didn't know what I was doing."

"My mother is still there, Mr. Price."

"In course she is, my lord. But Mr. Knox was saying that she is going to move back at once to the old house. It's very kind of his lordship, I'm sure, to let bygones be bygones." Lord George could only say that nothing was as yet settled, but that Mr. Price would be, of course, welcome to Cross Hall should the family go back to Manor Cross.

This took place about the 10th of June, and for a fortnight after that no change took place in any of their circumstances. Lady Alice Holdenough called upon Lady George, and, with her husband, dined at the Deanery; but Mary saw nothing else of any of the ladies of the family. No letter came from either of her sisters-in-law congratulating her as to her new hopes, and the Manor Cross carriage never stopped at the Dean's door. The sisters came to see Lady Alice, who lived also in the Close, but they never even asked for Lady George. All this made the Dean very angry, so that he declared that his daughter should under no circumstances be the first to give way. As she had not offended, she should never be driven to ask for pardon. During this time Lord George more than once saw his wife, but he had no further interview with the Dean.

CHAPTER IV.

Lady Sarah's Mission.

TOWARDS the end of June the family at Cross Hall were in great perturbation. In the first place it had been now settled that they were to go back to the great house early in July. This might have been a source of unalloyed gratification. The old Marchioness had been made very unhappy by the change to Cross Hall, and had persisted in calling her new home a wretched farmhouse. Both Lady Susanna and Lady Amelia were quite alive to the advantages of the great mansion. Lord George had felt that his position in the county had been very much injured by recent events. This might partly have come from his residence in London; but had, no doubt, been chiefly owing to the loss of influence arising from the late migration. He was glad enough to go back again. But Lady Sarah was strongly opposed to the new movement. "I don't think that mamma should be made liable to be turned out again," she had said to her brother and sisters.

"But mamma is particularly anxious to go," Amelia had replied.

"You can't expect mamma to think correctly about Brotherton," said Lady Sarah. "He is vicious

and fickle, and I do not like to feel that any of us should be in his power." But Lady Sarah, who had never been on good terms with her elder brother, was overruled, and everybody knew that in July the family was to return to Manor Cross.

Then there came tidings from London — unauthorised tidings, and, one may say, undignified tidings—but still tidings which were received with interest. Mrs. Toff had connections with Scumberg's, and heard through these connections that things at Scumberg's were not going on in a happy way. Mrs. Toff's correspondent declared that the Marquis had hardly been out of his bed since he had been knocked into the fireplace. Mrs. Toff, who had never loved the Dean and had never approved of that alliance, perhaps made the most of this. But the report, which was first made to the Dowager herself, caused very great uneasiness. The old lady said that she must go up to London herself to nurse her son. Then a letter was written by Lady Amelia to her brother asking for true information. This was the answer which Lady Amelia received:

"DEAR A.,—I'm pretty well, thank you. Don't trouble yourselves. Yours, B."

"I'm sure he's dying," said the Marchioness, "and he's too noble-hearted to speak of his sufferings." Nevertheless she felt that she did not dare to go up to Scumberg's just at present.

Then there came further tidings. Mrs. Toff was told that the Italian Marchioness had gone away,

and had taken Popenjoy with her. There was not anything necessarily singular in this. When a gentleman is going abroad with his family, he and his family need not as a matter of course travel together. Lord Brotherton had declared his purpose of returning to Italy, and there could be no reason why his wife, with the nurses and the august Popenjoy, should not go before him. It was just such an arrangement as such a man as Lord Brotherton would certainly make. But Mrs. Toff was sure that there was more in it than this. The Italian Marchioness had gone off very suddenly. There had been no grand packing up, but there had been some very angry words. And Popenjoy, when he was taken away, was supposed to be in a very poor condition of health. All this created renewed doubts in the mind of Lord George, or rather, perhaps, renewed hopes. Perhaps, after all, Popenjoy was not Popenjoy. And even if he were, it seemed that everyone concurred in thinking that the poor boy would die. Surely the Marquis would not have allowed a sick child to be carried away by an indiscreet Italian mother if he cared much for the sick child. But then Lord George had no real knowledge of these transactions. All this had come through Mrs. Toff, and he was hardly able to rely upon Mrs. Toff. Could he have communicated with the Dean, the Dean would soon have found out the truth. The Dean would have flown up to London and have known all about it in a couple of hours; but Lord George was not so active and clever as the Dean.

Then he wrote a letter to his brother, as follows:

"MY DEAR BROTHERTON,—We have heard through Mr. Knox that you wish us to move to Manor Cross at once, and we are preparing to do so. It is very kind of you to let us have the house, as Cross Hall is not all that my mother likes, and as there would hardly be room for us should my wife have children. I ought perhaps to have told you sooner that she is in the family way. We hear too that you are thinking of starting for Italy very soon, and that the Marchioness and Popenjoy have already gone. Would it suit you to tell us something of your future plans? It is not that I want to be inquisitive, but that I should like to know with reference to your comfort and our own whether you think that you will be back at Manor Cross next year. Of course we should be very sorry to be in your way, but we should not like to give up Cross Hall till we know that it will not be wanted again.

"I hope you are getting better. I could of course come up to town at a moment's notice, if you wished to see me.

"Yours affectionately,
"GEORGE GERMAIN."

There was nothing in this letter which ought to have made any brother angry, but the answer which came to it certainly implied that the Marquis had received it with dudgeon.

"MY DEAR GEORGE,"—the Marquis said—"I can

give you no guarantee that I shall not want Manor Cross again, and you ought not to expect it. If you and the family go there of course I must have rent for Cross Hall. I don't suppose I shall ever recover altogether from the injury that cursed brute did me.

"Yours, B.

"As to your coming family, of course I can say nothing. You won't expect me to be very full of joy. Nevertheless, for the honour of the family, I hope it is all right."

There was a brutality about this which for a time made the expectant father almost mad. He tore the letter at once into fragments, so that he might be ready with an answer if asked to show it to his sisters. Lady Sarah had known of his writing, and did ask as to her brother's answer. "Of course he told me nothing," said Lord George. "He is not like any other brother that ever lived."

"May I see his letter?"

"I have destroyed it. It was not fit to be seen. He will not say whether he means to come back next year or not."

"I would not stir, if it were for me to determine," said Lady Sarah. "Nobody ever ought to live in another person's house as long as he has one of his own; and of all men certainly not in Brotherton's." Nevertheless, the migration went on, and early in July the Marchioness was once more in possession

of her own room at Manor Cross, and Mrs. Toff was once again in the ascendant.

But what was to be done about Mary? Had Popenjoy been reported to enjoy robust health, and had Mary been as Mary was a month or two since, the Marchioness and Lady Susanna would have been contented that the present separation should have been permanent. They would at any rate have taken no steps to put an end to it which would not have implied abject submission on Mary's part. But now things were so altered! If this Popenjoy should die, and if Mary should have a son, Mary's position would be one which they could not afford to overlook. Though Mary should be living in absolute rebellion with that horrid Dean, still her Popenjoy would in course of time be the Popenjoy, and nothing that any Germain could do would stand in her way. Her Popenjoy would be Popenjoy as soon as the present Marquis should die, and the family estates would all in due time be his! Her position had been becoming daily more honourable as these rumours were received. Everyone at Manor Cross, down to the boy in the kitchen, felt that her dignity had been immeasurably increased. Her child should now certainly be born at Manor Cross—though the Deanery would have been quite good enough had the present Popenjoy been robust. Something must be done. The Marchioness was clear that Mary should be taken into favour and made much of—even hinted that she should not be asked to make shirts and petticoats—if only she could be separated from the pestilential Dean. She spoke in private to

her son, who declared that nothing would separate Mary from her father. "I don't think I could entertain him after what he did to Brotherton," said the Marchioness, bursting into tears.

There were great consultations at Manor Cross, in which the wisdom of Lady Sarah and Lady Susanna, and sometimes the good offices of Lady Alice Holdenough were taxed to the utmost. Lady Sarah had, since the beginning of these latter troubles, been Mary's best friend, though neither Mary nor the Dean had known of her good services. She had pretty nearly understood the full horror of the accusation brought by the Marquis, and had in her heart acquitted the Dean. Though she was hard she was very just. She believed no worse evil of Mary than that she had waltzed when her husband had wished her not to do so. To Lady Sarah all waltzing was an abomination, and disobedience to legitimate authority was abominable also. But then Mary had been taken to London, and had been thrown into temptation, and was very young. Lady Sarah knew that her own life was colourless, and was contented; but she could understand that women differently situated should not like a colourless existence. She had seen Adelaide Houghton and her sister-in-law together, and had known that her brother's lot had fallen in much the better place, and, to her, any separation between those whom God had bound together was shocking and wicked. Lady Susanna was louder and less just. She did not believe that Mary had done anything to merit expulsion from the family; but she did think that

her return to it should be accompanied by sackcloth and ashes. Mary had been pert to her, and she was not prone to forgive. Lady Alice had no opinion—could say nothing about it; but would be happy if, by her services, she could assuage matters.

"Does she ever talk of him," Lady Susanna asked.

"Not to me; I don't think she dares. But whenever he goes there she is delighted to see him."

"He has not been for the last ten days," said Lady Sarah.

"I don't think he will ever go again—unless it be to fetch her," said Lady Susanna. "I don't see how he can keep on going there, when she won't do as he bids her. I never heard of such a thing! Why should she choose to live with her father when she is his wife? I can't understand it at all."

"There has been some provocation," said Lady Sarah.

"What provocation? I don't know of any. Just to please her fancy, George had to take a house in London, and live there against his own wishes."

"It was natural that she should go to the Deanery for a few days; and when she was there no one went to see her."

"Why did she not come here first?" said Lady Susanna. "Why did she take upon herself to say where she would go, instead of leaving it to her husband. Of course it was the Dean. How can any man be expected to endure that his wife should be governed by her father instead of by himself? I think George has been very forbearing."

"You have hardly told the whole story," said

Lady Sarah. "Nor do I wish to tell it. Things were said which never should have been spoken. If you will have me, Alice, I will go to Brotherton for a day or two, and I will then go and see her."

And so it was arranged. No one in the house was told of the new plan, Lady Susanna having with difficulty been brought to promise silence. Lady Sarah's visit was of course announced, and that alone created great surprise, as Lady Sarah very rarely left home. The Marchioness had two or three floods of tears over it, and suggested that the carriage would be wanted for the entire day. This evil, however, was altogether escaped, as Lady Alice had a carriage of her own. "I'm sure I don't know who is to look after Mrs. Green," said the Marchioness. Mrs. Green was an old woman of ninety, who was supported by Germain charity, and was visited almost daily by Lady Sarah. But Lady Amelia promised that she would undertake Mrs. Green. "Of course I'm nobody," said the Marchioness. Mrs. Toff and all who knew the family were sure that the Marchioness would, in truth, enjoy her temporary freedom from her elder daughter's control.

Whatever might have been Lord George's suspicion, he said nothing about it. It had not been by agreement with him that the ladies of the family had abstained from calling on his wife. He had expressed himself in very angry terms as to the Dean's misconduct in keeping her in Brotherton, and in his wrath had said more than once that he would never speak to the Dean again. He had not asked anyone to go there; but neither had he asked them

not to do so. In certain of his moods he was indignant with his sisters for their treatment of his wife; and then again he would say to himself that it was impossible that they should go into the Dean's house after what the Dean had done. Now, when he heard that his eldest sister was going to the Close, he said not a word.

On the day of her arrival Lady Sarah knocked at the Deanery door alone. Up to this moment she had never put her foot in the house. Before the marriage she had known the Dean but slightly, and the visiting to be done by the family very rarely fell to her share. The streets of Brotherton were almost strange to her, so little was she given to leave the sphere of her own duties. In the hall, at the door of his study, she met the Dean. He was so surprised that he hardly knew how to greet her. "I am come to call upon Mary," said Lady Sarah, very brusquely.

"Better late than never," said the Dean, with a smile.

"I hope so," said Lady Sarah, very solemnly. "I hope that I am not doing that which ought not to be done. May I see her?"

"Of course you can see her. I daresay she will be delighted. Is your carriage here?"

"I am staying with my sister. Shall I go upstairs?"

Mary was in the garden, and Lady Sarah was alone for a few minutes in the drawing-room. Of course she thought that this time was spent in conference by the father and daughter; but the Dean

did not even see his child. He was anxious enough himself that the quarrel should be brought to an end, if only that end could be reached by some steps to be taken first by the other side. Mary, as she entered the room, was almost frightened, for Lady Sarah had certainly been the greatest of the bugbears when she was living at Manor Cross. "I am come to congratulate you," said Lady Sarah, putting her hand out straight before her.

Better late than never. Mary did not say so, as her father had done, but only thought it. "Thank you," she said, in a very low voice. "Has anyone else come?"

"No—no one else. I am with Alice, and as I have very very much to say, I have come alone. Oh Mary, dear Mary, is not this sad?" Mary was not at all disposed to yield, or to acknowledge that the sadness was, in any degree, her fault; but she remembered, at the moment, that Lady Sarah had never called her "dear Mary" before. "Don't you wish that you were back with George?"

"Of course I do. How can I wish anything else?"

"Why don't you go back to him?"

"Let him come here and fetch me, and be friends with papa. He promised that he would come and stay here. Is he well, Sarah?"

"Yes; he is well."

"Quite well? Give him my love—my best love. Tell him that in spite of everything I love him better than all the world."

"I am sure you do."

"Yes; of course I do. I could be so happy now if he would come to me."

"You can go to him. I will take you if you wish it."

"You don't understand," said Mary.

"What don't I understand?"

"About papa."

"Will he not let you go to your husband?"

"I suppose he would let me go; but if I were gone what would become of him?"

Lady Sarah did not, in truth, understand this. "When he gave you to be married," she said, "of course he knew that you must go away from him and live with your husband. A father does not expect a married daughter to stay in his own house."

"But he expects to be able to go to hers. He does not expect to be quarrelled with by everybody. If I were to go to Manor Cross, papa couldn't even come and see me."

"I think he could."

"You don't know papa if you fancy he would go into any house in which he was not welcome. Of course I know that you have all quarrelled with him. You think because he beat the Marquis up in London that he oughtn't ever to be spoken to again. But I love him for what he did more dearly than ever. He did it for my sake. He was defending me, and defending George. I have done nothing wrong. If it is only for George's sake, I will never admit that I have deserved to be treated in this way. None of you have come to see me before, since I came back from London, and now George doesn't come."

"We should all have been kind to you if you had come to us first."

"Yes; and then I should never have been allowed to be here at all. Let George come and stay here, if it is only for two days, and be kind to papa, and then I will go with him to Manor Cross."

Lady Sarah was much surprised by the courage and persistence of the young wife's plea. The girl had become a woman, and was altered even in appearance. She certainly looked older, but then she was certainly much more beautiful than before. She was dressed, not richly, but with care, and looked like a woman of high family. Lady Sarah, who never changed either the colour or the material of her brown morning gown, liked to look at her, telling herself that should it ever be this woman's fate to be Marchioness of Brotherton, she would not in appearance disgrace the position. "I hope you can understand that we are very anxious about you," she said.

"I don't know."

"You might know, then. Your baby will be a Germain."

"Ah—yes—for that! You can't think I am happy without George. I am longing all day long, from morning to night, that he will come back to me. But after all that has happened, I must do what papa advises. If I were just to go to Manor Cross now, and allow myself to be carried there alone, you would all feel that I had been—forgiven. Isn't that true?"

"You would be very welcome."

"Susanna would forgive me, and your mother. And I should be like a girl who has been punished, and who is expected to remember ever so long that she has been naughty. I won't be forgiven, except by George—and he has nothing to forgive. You would all think me wicked if I were there, because I would not live in your ways."

"We should not think you wicked, Mary."

"Yes, you would. You thought me wicked before."

"Don't you believe we love you, Mary?"

She considered a moment before she made a reply, but then made it very clearly: "No," she said, "I don't think you do. George loves me. Oh, I hope he loves me."

"You may be quite sure of that. And I love you."

"Yes; just as you love all people, because the Bible tells you. That is not enough."

"I will love you like a sister, Mary, if you will come back to us."

She liked being asked. She was longing to be once more with her husband. She desired of all things to be able to talk to him of her coming hopes. There was something in the tone of Lady Sarah's voice, different from the tones of old, which had its effect. She would promise to go if only some slightest concession could be made, which should imply that neither she nor her father had given just cause of offence. And she did feel—she was always feeling—that her husband ought to remember that she

had never brought counter-charges against him. She had told no one of Mrs. Houghton's letter. She was far too proud to give the slightest hint that she too had her grievance. But surely he should remember it. "I should like to go," she said.

"Then come back with me to-morrow." Lady Sarah had come only on this business, and if the business were completed there would be no legitimate reason for her prolonged sojourn at Brother-ton.

"Would George come here for one night?"

"Surely, Mary, you would not drive a bargain with your husband?"

"But papa!"

"Your father can only be anxious for your happiness."

"Therefore I must be anxious for his. I can't say that I'll go without asking him."

"Then ask him and come in and see me at Alice's house this afternoon. And tell your father that I say you shall be received with all affection."

Mary made no promise that she would do even this as Lady Sarah took her leave; but she did at once consult her father. "Of course you can go if you like it, dearest."

"But you!"

"Never mind me. I am thinking only of you. They will be different to you now that they think you will be the mother of the heir."

"Would you take me, and stay there, for one night?"

"I don't think I could do that, dear. I do not consider that I have been exactly asked."

"But if they will ask you?"

"I cannot ask to be asked. To tell the truth, I am not at all anxious to be entertained at Manor Cross. They would always be thinking of that fireplace into which the Marquis fell."

The difficulty was very great, and Mary could not see her way through it. She did not go to Dr. Holdenough's house that afternoon, but wrote a very short note to Lady Sarah begging that George might come over and talk to her.

CHAPTER V.

"That young fellow in There."

A DAY or two after this Lord George did call at the Deanery, but stayed there only for a minute or two, and on that occasion did not even speak of Mary's return to Manor Cross. He was considerably flurried, and showed his wife the letter which had caused his excitement. It was from his brother, and, like most of the Marquis's letters, was very short.

"I think you had better come up and see me. I'm not very well. B."

That was the entire letter, and he was now on his way to London.

"Do you think it is much, George?"

"He would not write like that unless he were really ill. He has never recovered from the results of that—accident."

Then it occurred to Mary that if the Marquis were to die, and Popenjoy were to die, she would at once be the Marchioness of Brotherton, and that people would say that her father had raised her to the title by—killing the late lord. And it would be so. There was something so horrible in this that she trembled as she thought of it. "Oh, George!"

"It is very—very sad."

"It was his fault; wasn't it? I would give all the world that he were well; but it was his fault." Lord George was silent. "Oh, George, dear George, acknowledge that. Was it not so? Do you not think so? Could papa stand by and hear him call me such names as that? Could you have done so?"

"A man should not be killed for an angry word."

"Papa did not mean to kill him!"

"I can never be reconciled to the man who has taken the life of my brother."

"Do you love your brother better than me?"

"You and your father are not one."

"If this is to be said of him I will always be one with papa. He did it for my sake and for yours. If they send him to prison I will go with him. George, tell the truth about it."

"I always tell the truth," he said angrily.

"Did he not do right to protect his girl's name? I will never leave him now; never. If everybody is against him, I will never leave him."

No good was to be got from the interview. Whatever progress Lady Sarah may have made was altogether undone by the husband's sympathy for his injured brother. Mary declared to herself that if there must be two sides, if there must be a real quarrel, she could never be happy again, but that she certainly would not now desert her father. Then she was left alone. Ah, what would happen if the man were to die. Would any woman ever have risen to high rank in so miserable a manner! In her tu-

mult of feelings she told her father everything, and was astonished by his equanimity. "It may be so," he said, "and if so, there will be considerable inconvenience."

"Inconvenience, papa!"

"There will be a coroner's inquest, and perhaps some kind of trial. But when the truth comes out no English jury will condemn me."

"Who will tell the truth, papa?"

The Dean knew it all, and was well aware that there would be no one to tell the truth on his behalf—no one to tell it in such guise that a jury would be entitled to accept the telling as evidence. A verdict of manslaughter, with punishment at the discretion of the judge, would be the probable result. But the Dean did not choose to add to his daughter's discomfort by explaining this. "The chances are that this wretched man is dying. No doubt his health is bad. How should the health of such a man be good? But had he been so hurt as to die from it, the doctor would have found something out long since. He may be dying, but he is not dying from what I did to him." The Dean was disturbed, but in his perturbation he remembered that if the man were to die there would be nothing but that little alien Popenjoy between his daughter and the title.

Lord George hurried up to town, and took a room for himself at an hotel in Jermyn Street. He would not go to Scumberg's, as he did not wish to mix his private life with that of his brother. That afternoon he went across, and was told that his

brother would see him at three o'clock the next day. Then he interrogated Mrs. Walker as to his brother's condition. Mrs. Walker knew nothing about it, except that the Marquis lay in bed during the most of his time, and that Dr. Pullbody was there every day. Now Dr. Pullbody was an eminent physician, and had the Marquis been dying from an injury in his back an eminent surgeon would have been required. Lord George dined at his club on a mutton-chop and half a pint of sherry, and then found himself terribly dull. What could he do with himself? Whither could he betake himself? So he walked across Piccadilly and went to the old house in Berkeley Square.

He had certainly become very sick of the woman there. He had discussed the matter with himself and had found out that he did not care one straw for the woman. He had acknowledged to himself that she was a flirt, a mass of affectation, and a liar. And yet he went to her house. She would be soft to him and would flatter him, and the woman would trouble herself to do so. She would make him welcome, and in spite of his manifest neglect would try, for the hour, to make him comfortable.

He was shown up into the drawing-room, and there he found Jack De Baron, Guss Mildmay—and Mr. Houghton, fast asleep. The host was wakened up to bid him welcome, but was soon slumbering again. De Baron and Guss Mildmay had been playing bagatelle—or flirting in the back drawing-room, and after a word or two returned to their game. "Ill is he?" said Mrs. Houghton, speaking

of the Marquis, "I suppose he has never recovered from that terrible blow."

"I have not seen him yet, but I am told that Dr. Pullbody is with him."

"What a tragedy—if anything should happen! She has gone away; has she not?"

"I do not know. I did not ask."

"I think she has gone, and that she has taken the child with her; a poor puny thing. I made Houghton go there to inquire, and he saw the child. I hear from my father that we are to congratulate you."

"Things are too sad for congratulation."

"It is horrible, is it not? And Mary is with her father."

"Yes, she's at the Deanery."

"Is that right?—when all this is going on?"

"I don't think anything is right," he said gloomily.

"Has she—quarrelled with you, George?" At the sound of his christian-name from the wife's lips he looked round at the sleeping husband. He was quite sure that Mr. Houghton would not like to hear his wife call him George. "He sleeps like a church," said Mrs. Houghton in a low voice. The two were sitting close together and Mr. Houghton's arm-chair was at a considerable distance. The occasional knocking of the balls, and the continued sound of voices was to be heard from the other room. "If you have separated from her I think you ought to tell me."

"I saw her to-day as I came through."

"But she does not go to Manor Cross?"

"She has been at the Deanery since she went down."

Of course this woman knew of the quarrel which had taken place in London. Of course she had been aware that Lady George had stayed behind in opposition to her husband's wishes. Of course she had learned every detail as to the Kappa-kappa. She took it for granted that Mary was in love with Jack De Baron, and thought it quite natural that she should be so. "She never understood you as I should have done, George," whispered the lady. Lord George again looked at the sleeping man, who grunted and moved. "He would hardly hear a pistol go off."

"Shouldn't I?" said the sleeping man, rubbing away the flies from his nose. Lord George wished himself back at his club.

"Come out into the balcony," said Mrs. Houghton. She led the way and he was obliged to follow her. There was a balcony to this house surrounded with full-grown shrubs, so that they who stood there could hardly be seen from the road below. "He never knows what anyone is saying." As she spoke she came close up to her visitor. "At any rate he has the merit of never troubling me or himself by any jealousies."

"I should be very sorry to give him cause," said Lord George.

"What's that you say?" Poor Lord George had simply been awkward, having intended no severity. "Have you given him no cause?"

"I meant that I should be sorry to trouble him."

"Ah—h! That is a different thing. If husbands would only be complaisant, how much nicer it would be for everybody." Then there was a pause. "You do love me, George?" There was a beautiful moon that was bright through the green foliage, and there was a smell of sweet exotics, and the garden of the square was mysteriously pretty as it lay below them in the moonlight. He stood silent, making no immediate answer to this appeal. He was in truth plucking up his courage for a great effort. "Say that you love me. After all that is passed you must love me." Still he was silent. "George, will you not speak?"

"Yes; I will speak."

"Well, sir!"

"I do not love you."

"What! But you are laughing at me. You have some scheme or some plot going on."

"I have nothing going on. It is better to say it. I love my wife."

"Psha! love her;—yes, as you would a doll or any pretty plaything. I loved her too till she took it into her stupid head to quarrel with me. I don't grudge her such love as that. She is a child."

It occurred to Lord George at the moment that his wife had certainly more than an infantine will of her own. "You don't know her," he said.

"And now, after all, you tell me to my face that you do not love me! Why have you sworn so often that you did?" He hadn't sworn it often. He had never sworn it at all since she had rejected him. He had been induced to admit a passion in

the most meagre terms. "Do you own yourself to be false?" she asked.

"I am true to my wife."

"Your wife! One would think you were the curate of the parish. And is that to be all?"

"Yes, Mrs. Houghton; that had better be all."

"Then why did you come here? Why are you here now?" She had not expected such courage from him, and almost thought more of him now than she had ever thought before. "How dare you come to this house at all?"

"Perhaps I should not have come."

"And I am nothing to you?" she asked in her most plaintive accents. "After all those scenes at Manor Cross you can think of me with indifference?" There had been no scenes, and as she spoke he shook his head, intending to disclaim them. "Then go!" How was he to go? Was he to wake Mr. Houghton? Was he to disturb that other loving couple? Was he to say no word of farewell to her? "Oh, stay," she added, "and unsay it all—unsay it all and give no reason, and it shall be as though it were never said." Then she seized him by the arm and looked passionately up into his eyes. Mr. Houghton moved restlessly in his chair and coughed aloud. "He'll be off again in half a moment," said Mrs. Houghton. Then he was silent, and she was silent, looking at him. And he heard a word or two come clearly from the back drawing-room. "You will, Jack; won't you, dear Jack?"

The ridicule of the thing touched even him. "I think I had better go," he said.

"Then go!"

"Good-night, Mrs. Houghton."

"I will not say good-night. I will never speak to you again. You are not worth speaking to. You are false. I knew that men could be false, but not so false as you. Even that young fellow in there has some heart. He loves your—darling wife, and will be true to his love." She was a very devil in her wickedness. He started as though he had been stung, and rushed inside for his hat. "Hallo, Germain, are you going?" said the man of the house, rousing himself for the moment.

"Yes, I am going. Where did I leave my hat?"

"You put it on the piano," said Mrs. Houghton in her mildest voice, standing at the window. Then he seized his hat and went off. "What a very stupid man he is," she said, as she entered the room.

"A very good sort of fellow," said Mr. Houghton.

"He's a gentleman all round," said Jack De Baron. Jack knew pretty well how the land lay, and could guess what had occurred.

"I am not so sure of that," said the lady. "If he were a gentleman as you say all round, he would not be so much afraid of his elder brother. He has come up to town now merely because Brotherton sent to him, and when he went to Scumberg's the Marquis would not see him. He is just like his sisters—priggish, punctilious, and timid."

"He has said something nasty to you," remarked her husband, "or you would not speak of him like that."

She had certainly said something very nasty to him. As he returned to his club he kept on repeating to himself her last words: "He loves your darling wife." Into what a mass of trouble had he not fallen through the Dean's determination that his daughter should live in London! He was told on all sides that this man was in love with his wife, and he knew—he had so much evidence for knowing—that his wife liked the man. And now he was separated from his wife, and she could go whither her father chose to take her. For aught that he could do she might be made to live within the reach of this young scoundrel. No doubt his wife would come back if he would agree to take her back on her own terms. She would again belong to him if he would agree to take the Dean along with her. But taking the Dean would be to put himself into the Dean's leading-strings. The Dean was strong and imperious; and then the Dean was rich. But anything would be better than losing his wife. Faulty as he thought her to be, she was sweet as no one else was sweet. When alone with him she would seem to make every word of his a law. Her caresses were full of bliss to him. When he kissed her, her face would glow with pleasure. Her voice was music to him; her least touch was joy. There was a freshness about the very things which she wore which pervaded his senses. There was a homeliness about her beauty which made her more lovely in her own room than when dressed for balls and parties. And yet he had heard it said that when dressed she was declared to be the most lovely woman that had

come to London that season. And now she was about to become the mother of his child. He was thoroughly in love with his wife. And yet he was told that his wife was "Jack De Baron's darling!"

CHAPTER VI.

The Marquis makes a Proposition.

The next morning was very weary with him, as he had nothing to do till three o'clock. He was most anxious to know whether his sister-in-law had in truth left London, but he had no means of finding out. He could not ask questions on such a subject from Mrs. Walker and her satellites; and he felt that it would be difficult to ask even his brother. He was aware that his brother had behaved to him badly, and he had determined not to be over-courteous—unless, indeed, he should find his brother to be dangerously ill. But above all things he would avoid all semblance of indisputableness which might seem to have a reference to the condition of his own unborn child. He walked up and down St. James's Park thinking of all this, looking up once at the windows of the house which had brought so much trouble on him, that house of his which had hardly been his own, but not caring to knock at the door and enter it. He lunched in solitude at his club, and exactly at three o'clock presented himself at Seemberg's door. The Marquis's servant was soon with him, and then again he found himself alone in that dreary sitting-room. How wretched must his brother be, living there from day to day.

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without a friend, or, as far as he was aware, without a companion!

He was there full twenty minutes, walking about the room in exasperated ill-humour, when at last the door was opened and his brother was brought in between two men-servants. He was not actually carried, but was so supported as to appear unable to walk. Lord George asked some questions, but received no immediate answers. The Marquis was at the moment thinking too much of himself and of the men who were ministering to him to pay any attention to his brother. Then by degrees he was fixed in his place, and after what seemed to be interminable delay the two men went away. "Ugh!" ejaculated the Marquis.

"I am glad to see that you can at any rate leave your room," said Lord George.

"Then let me tell you that it takes deuced little to make you glad."

The beginning was not auspicious, and further progress in conversation seemed to be difficult. "They told me yesterday that Dr. Pullbody was attending you."

"He has this moment left me. I don't in the least believe in him. Your London doctors are such conceited asses that you can't speak to them. Because they can make more money than their brethren in other countries they think that they know everything, and that nobody else knows anything. It is just the same with the English in every branch of life. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the greatest priest going, because he has the greatest income,

and the Lord Chancellor the greatest lawyer. All you fellows here are flunkies from top to bottom."

Lord George certainly had not come up to town merely to hear the great dignitaries of his country abused. But he was comforted somewhat as he reflected that a dying man would hardly turn his mind to such an occupation. When a sick man criticises his doctor severely he is seldom in a very bad way. "Have you anybody else with you, Brother-ton?"

"One is quite enough. But I had another. A fellow named Bolton was here, a baronet, I believe, who told me I ought to walk a mile in Hyde Park every day. When I told him I couldn't, he said I didn't know till I tried. I handed him a five-pound note, upon which he hauled out three pounds nineteen shillings change and walked off in a huff. I didn't send for him any more."

"Sir James Bolton has a great reputation."

"No doubt. I daresay he could cut off my leg if I asked him, and would then have handed out two pounds eighteen with the same indifference."

"I suppose your back is better?"

"No, it isn't,—not a bit. It gets worse and worse."

"What does Dr. Pullbody say?"

"Nothing that anybody can understand. By George! he takes my money freely enough. He tells me to eat beefsteaks and drink port-wine. I'd sooner die at once. I told him so, or something a little stronger, I believe, and he almost jumped out of his shoes."

"He doesn't think there is any——danger?"

"He doesn't know anything about it. I wish I could have your father-in-law in a room by ourselves, with a couple of loaded revolvers. I'd make better work of it than he did."

"God forbid!"

"I daresay he won't give me the chance. He thinks he has done a plucky thing because he's as strong as a brewer's horse. I call that downright cowardice."

"It depends on how it began, Brotherton."

"Of course there had been words between us. Things always begin in that way."

"You must have driven him very hard."

"Are you going to take his part? Because, if so, there may as well be an end of it. I thought you had found him out and had separated yourself from him. You can't think that he is a gentleman?"

"He is a very liberal man."

"You mean to sell yourself, then, for the money that was made in his father's stables?"

"I have not sold myself at all. I haven't spoken to him for the last month."

"So I understood; therefore I sent for you. You are all back at Manor Cross now?"

"Yes; we are there."

"You wrote me a letter which I didn't think quite the right thing. But, however, I don't mind telling you that you can have the house if we can come to terms about it."

"What terms?"

"You can have the house and the park, and Cross Hall Farm too, if you'll pledge yourself that the Dean shall never enter your house again, and that you will never enter his house or speak to him. You shall do pretty nearly as you please at Manor Cross. In that event I shall live abroad, or here in London if I come to England. I think that's a fair offer, and I don't suppose that you yourself can be very fond of the man." Lord George sat perfectly silent while the Marquis waited for a reply. "After what has passed," continued he, "you can't suppose that I should choose that he should be entertained in my dining-room."

"You said the same about my wife before."

"Yes, I did; but a man may separate himself from his father-in-law when he can't very readily get rid of his wife. I never saw your wife."

"No;—and therefore cannot know what she is."

"I don't in the least want to know what she is. You and I, George, haven't been very lucky in our marriages."

"I have."

"Do you think so? You see I speak more frankly of myself. But I am not speaking of your wife. Your wife's father has been a blister to me ever since I came back to this country, and you must make up your mind whether you will take his part or mine. You know what he did, and what he induced you to do about Popenjoy. You know the reports that he has spread abroad. And you know what happened in this room. I expect you to throw him off altogether." Lord George had thrown the

Dean off altogether. For reasons of his own he had come to the conclusion that the less he had to do with the Dean the better for himself; but he certainly could give no such pledge as this now demanded from him. "You won't make me this promise?" said the Marquis.

"No; I can't do that."

"Then you'll have to turn out of Manor Cross," said the Marquis, smiling.

"You do not mean that my mother must be turned out?"

"You and my mother, I suppose, will live together?"

"It does not follow. I will pay you rent for Cross Hall."

"You shall do no such thing. I will not let Cross Hall to any friend of the Dean's."

"You cannot turn your mother out immediately after telling her to go there!"

"It will be you who turn her out—not I. I have made you a very liberal offer," said the Marquis.

"I will have nothing to do with it," said Lord George. "In any house in which I act as master I will be the judge who shall be entertained and who not."

"The first guests you will ask, no doubt, will be the Dean of Brotherton and Captain De Baron." This was so unbearable that he at once made a rush at the door. "You'll find, my friend," said the Marquis, "that you'll have to get rid of the Dean and of the Dean's daughter as well." Then Lord

George swore to himself as he left the room that he would never willingly be in his brother's company again.

He was rushing down the stairs, thinking about his wife, swearing to himself that all this was calumny, yet confessing to himself that there must have been terrible indiscretion to make the calumny so general, when he was met on the landing by Mrs. Walker in her best silk gown. "Please, my lord, might I take the liberty of asking for one word in my own room? Lord George followed her and heard the one word. "Please, my lord, what are we to do with the Marquis?"

"Do with him!"

"About his going."

"Why should he go? He pays his bills, I suppose?"

"Oh yes, my lord; the Marquis pays his bills. There ain't no difficulty there, my lord. He's not quite himself."

"You mean in health?"

"Yes, my lord—in health. He don't give himself—not a chance. He's out every night—in his brougham."

"I thought he was almost confined to his room?"

"Out every night, my lord, and that Courier with him on the box. When we gave him to understand that all manner of people couldn't be allowed to come here, we thought he'd go."

"The Marchioness has gone?"

"Oh yes; and the poor little boy. It was bad enough when they was here, because things were so

uncomfortable; but now—— I wish something could be done, my lord.” Lord George could only assure her that it was out of his power to do anything. He had no control over his brother, and did not even mean to come and see him again. “Dearie me!” said Mrs. Walker; “he’s a very owdacious nobleman, I fear—is the Marquis.”

All this was very bad. Lord George had learned, indeed, that the Marchioness and Popenjoy were gone, and was able to surmise that the parting had not been pleasant. His brother would probably soon follow them. But what was he to do himself! He could not, in consequence of such a warning, drag his mother and sisters back to Cross Hall, into which house Mr. Price, the farmer, had already moved himself. Nor could he very well leave his mother without explaining to her why he did so. Would it be right that he should take such a threat, uttered as that had been, as a notice to quit the house? He certainly would not live in his brother’s house in opposition to his brother. But how was he to obey the orders of such a madman?

When he reached Brotherton he went at once to the Deanery, and was very glad to find his wife without her father. He did not as yet wish to renew his friendly relations with the Dean, although he had refused to pledge himself to a quarrel. He still thought it to be his duty to take his wife away from her father, and to cause her to expiate those calumnies as to De Baron by some ascetic mode of life. She had been, since his last

visit, in a state of nervous anxiety about the Marquis. "How is he, George?" she asked at once.

"I don't know how he is. I think he's mad."

"Mad!"

"He's leading a wretched life."

"But his back? Is he; is he——? I am afraid that papa is so unhappy about it! He won't say anything; but I know he is unhappy."

"You may tell your father from me that, as far as I can judge, his illness, if he is ill, has nothing to do with that."

"Oh, George, you have made me so happy."

"I wish I could be happy myself. I sometimes think that we had better go and live abroad."

"Abroad! You and I?"

"Yes. I suppose you would go with me?"

"Of course I would. But your mother?"

"I know there's all manner of trouble about it." He could not tell her of his brother's threat about the house, nor could he, after that threat, again bid her come to Manor Cross. As there was nothing more to be said he soon left her, and went to the house which he had again been forbidden to call his home.

But he told his sister everything. "I was afraid," she said, "that we should be wrong in coming here."

"It is no use going back to that now."

"Not the least. What ought we to do? It will break mamma's heart to be turned out again."

"I suppose we must ask Mr. Knox."

"It is unreasonable—monstrous! Mr. Price has

got all his furniture back again into the Hall! It is terrible that any man should have so much power to do evil."

"I could not pledge myself about the Dean, Sarah."

"Certainly not. Nothing could be more wicked than his asking you. Of course, you will not tell mamma?"

"Not yet."

"I should take no notice of it whatever. If he means to turn us out of the house let him write to you, or send word by Mr. Knox. Out every night in London! What does he do?" Lord George shook his head. "I don't think he goes into society." Lord George could only shake his head again. There are so many kinds of society! "They said he was coming down to Mr. De Baron's in August."

"I heard that too. I don't know whether he'll come now. To see him brought in between two servants, you'd think that he couldn't move."

"But they told you he goes out every night?"

"I've no doubt that is true."

"I don't understand it all," said Lady Sarah. "What is he to gain by pretending? And so they used to quarrel?"

"I tell you what the woman told me."

"I've no doubt it's true. And she has gone and taken Popenjoy? Did he say anything about Popenjoy?"

"Not a word," said Lord George.

"It's quite possible that the Dean may have been right all through. What terrible mischief a

man may do when he throws all idea of duty to the winds! If I were you, George, I should just go on as though I had not seen him at all."

That was the decision to which Lord George came, but in that he was soon shaken by a letter which he received from Mr. Knox. "I think if you were to go up to London and see your brother it would have a good effect," said Mr. Knox. In fact Mr. Knox's letter contained little more than a petition that Lord George would pay another visit to the Marquis. To this request, after consultation with his sister, he gave a positive refusal.

"MY DEAR MR. KNOX," he said, "I saw my brother less than a week ago, and the meeting was so unsatisfactory in every respect that I do not wish to repeat it. If he has anything to say to me as to the occupation of the house, he had better say it through you. I think, however, that my brother should be told that though I may be subject to his freaks, we cannot allow that my mother should be annoyed by them.

"Faithfully yours,

"GEORGE GERMAIN."

At the end of another week Mr. Knox came in person. The Marquis was willing that his mother should live at Manor Cross—and his sisters. But he had—so he said—been insulted by his brother, and must insist that Lord George should leave the house. If this order were not obeyed he should at once put the letting of the place into the hands of

a house-agent. Then Mr. Knox went on to explain that he was to take back to the Marquis a definite reply. "When people are dependent on me I choose that they shall be dependent," the Marquis had said.

Now, after a prolonged consultation to which Lady Susanna was admitted—so serious was the thing to be considered—it was found to be necessary to explain the matter to the Marchioness. Some step clearly must be taken. They must all go, or Lord George must go. Cross Hall was occupied, and Mr. Price was going to be married on the strength of his occupation. A lease had been executed to Mr. Price, which the Dowager herself had been called upon to sign. "Mamma will never be made to understand it," said Lady Susanna.

"No one can understand it," said Lord George. Lord George insisted that the ladies should continue to live at the large house, insinuating that, for himself, he would take some wretched residence in the most miserable corner of the globe which he could find.

The Marchioness was told, and really fell into a very bad way. She literally could not understand it, and aggravated matters by appearing to think that her younger son had been wanting in respect to his elder brother. And it was all that nasty Dean! And Mary must have behaved very badly, or Brotherton would not have been so severe! "Mamma," said Lady Sarah, moved beyond her wont, "you ought not to think such things, George

has been true to you all his life, and Mary has done nothing. It is all Brotherton's fault. When did he ever behave well? If we are to be miserable, let us at any rate tell the truth about it." Then the Marchioness was put to bed and remained there for two days.

At last the Dean heard of it — first through Lady Alice, and then directly from Lady Sarah, who took the news to the Deanery. Upon which he wrote the following letter to his son-in-law:

"MY DEAR GEORGE,—I think your brother is not quite sane. I never thought that he was. Since I have had the pleasure of knowing you, especially since I have been connected with the family, he has been the cause of all the troubles that have befallen it. It is to be regretted that you should ever have moved back to Manor Cross, because his temper is so uncertain, and his motives so unchristian.

"I think I understand your position now, and will therefore not refer to it further than to say that, when not in London, I hope you will make the Deanery your home. You have your own house in town, and when here will be close to your mother and sisters. Anything I can do to make this a comfortable residence for you shall be done; and it will surely go for something with you, that a compliance with this request on your part will make another person the happiest woman in the world.

"In such an emergency as this am I not justified in saying that any little causes of displeasure that

may have existed between you and me should now be forgotten? If you will think of them they really amount to nothing. For you I have the esteem of a friend and the affection of a father-in-law. A more devoted wife than my daughter does not live. Be a man and come to us, and let us make much of you.

"She knows I am writing, and sends her love; but I have not told her of the subject lest she should be wild with hope.

"Affectionately yours,

"HENRY LOVELACE."

The letter as he read it moved him to tears, but when he had finished the reading he told himself that it was impossible. There was one phrase in the letter which went sorely against the grain with him. The Dean told him to be a man. Did the Dean mean to imply that his conduct hitherto had been unmanly?

CHAPTER VII.

“Wouldn't you come here—for a Week?”

LORD GEORGE GERMAIN was very much troubled by the nobility of the Dean's offer. He felt sure that he could not accept it, but he felt at the same time that it would be almost as difficult to decline to accept it. What else was he to do? where was he to go? how was he now to exercise authority over his wife? With what face could he call upon her to leave her father's house, when he had no house of his own to which to take her? There was, no doubt, the house in London, but that was her house, and peculiarly disagreeable to him. He might go abroad; but then what would become of his mother and sisters? He had trained himself to think that his presence was necessary to the very existence of the family; and his mother, though she ill-treated him, was quite of the same opinion. There would be a declaration of a break up made to all the world if he were to take himself far away from Manor Cross. In his difficulty of course he consulted Lady Sarah. What other counsellor was possible to him?

He was very fair with his sister, trying to explain everything to her—everything, with one or two exceptions. Of course he said nothing of the

Houghton correspondence, nor did he give exactly a true account of the scene at Mrs. Montacute Jones's ball; but he succeeded in making Lady Sarah understand that though he accused his wife of nothing, he felt it to be incumbent on him to make her completely subject to his own authority. "No doubt she was wrong to waltz after what you told her," said Lady Sarah.

"Very wrong."

"But it was simply high spirits, I suppose."

"I don't think she understands how circumspect a young married woman ought to be," said the anxious husband. "She does not see how very much such high spirits may injure me. It enables an enemy to say such terrible things."

"Why should she have an enemy, George?" Then Lord George merely whispered his brother's name. "Why should Brotherton care to be her enemy?"

"Because of the Dean."

"She should not suffer for that. Of course, George, Mary and I are very different. She is young and I am old. She has been brought up to the pleasures of life, which I disregard, perhaps because they never came in my way. She is beautiful and soft—a woman such as men like to have near them. I never was such a one. I see the perils and pitfalls in her way; but I fancy that I am prone to exaggerate them, because I cannot sympathise with her yearnings. I often condemn her frivolity, but at the same time I condemn my

own severity. I think she is true of heart—a loving woman. And she is at any rate your wife.”

“You don’t suppose that I wish to be rid of her?”

“Certainly not; but in keeping her close to you you must remember that she has a nature of her own. She cannot feel as you do in all things any more than you feel as she does.”

“One must give way to the other.”

“Each must give way to the other if there is to be any happiness.”

“You don’t mean to say she ought to waltz, or dance stage-dances?”

“Let all that go for the present. She won’t want to dance much for a time now, and when she has a baby in her arms she will be more apt to look at things with your eyes. If I were you I should accept the Dean’s offer.”

There was a certain amount of comfort in this, but there was more pain. His wife had defied him, and it was necessary to his dignity that she should be brought to submission before she was received into his full grace. And the Dean had encouraged her in those acts of defiance. They had, of course, come from him. She had been more her father’s daughter than her husband’s wife, and his pride could not endure that it should be so. Everything had gone against him. Hitherto he had been able to desire her to leave her father and to join him in his own home. Now he had no home to which to take her. He had endeavoured to do his duty—always excepting that disagree-

able episode with Mrs. Houghton—and this was the fruit of it. He had tried to serve his brother, because his brother was Marquis of Brotherton, and his brother had used him like an enemy. His mother treated him with steady injustice. And now his sister told him that he was to yield to the Dean! He could not bring himself to yield to the Dean. At last he answered the Dean's letter as follows:

"MY DEAR DEAN,

"Your offer is very kind, but I do not think that I can accept it just at present. No doubt I am very much troubled by my brother's conduct. I have endeavoured to do my duty by him, and have met with but a poor return. What arrangements I shall ultimately make as to a home for myself and Mary, I cannot yet say. When anything is settled I shall, of course, let her know at once. It will always be, at any rate, one of my chief objects to make her comfortable, but I think this should be done under my roof, and not under yours. I hope to be able to see her in a day or two, when perhaps I shall have been able to settle upon something.

"Yours always affectionately,

"G. GERMAIN."

Then, upon reading this over and feeling that it was cold and almost heartless, he added a post-script. "I do feel your offer to be very generous, but I think you will understand the reasons which

make it impossible that I should accept it." The Dean as he read this declared to himself that he knew the reasons very well. The reasons were not far to search. The man was pig-headed, foolish, and obstinately proud. So the Dean thought Lord George's presence in the house would not be a comfort to him. As far as he himself was concerned, Lord George had never been a pleasant companion to him. But he would have put up with worse than Lord George for the sake of his daughter.

On the very next day Lord George rode into Brotherton and went direct to the Deanery. Having left his horse at the inn he met the Dean in the Close, coming out of a side door of the Cathedral Close to the Deanery gate. "I thought I would come in to see Mary," he said.

"Mary will be delighted."

"I did not believe that I should be able to come so soon when I wrote yesterday."

"I hope you are going to tell her that you have thought better of my little plan."

"Well, no; I don't think I can do that. I think she must come to me first, sir."

"But where!"

"I have not yet quite made up my mind. Of course there is a difficulty. My brother's conduct has been so very strange."

"Your brother is a madman, George."

"It is very easy to say so, but that does not make it any better. Though he be ever so mad the house is his own. If he chooses to turn me

out of it he can. I have told Mr. Knox that I would leave it within a month, for my mother's sake; but that, as I had gone there at his express instance, I could not move sooner. I think I was justified in that."

"I don't see why you should go at all."

"He would let the place."

"Or, if you do go, why you should not come here. But, of course, you know your own business best. How d'ye do, Mr. Groschut? I hope the Bishop is better this morning."

At this moment, just as they were entering the Deanery gate, the Bishop's chaplain had appeared. He had been very studious in spreading a report, which he had no doubt believed to be true, that all the Germain family, including Lord George, had altogether repudiated the Dean, whose daughter, according to his story, was left upon her father's hands because she would not be received at Manor Cross. For Mr. Groshut had also heard of Jack De Baron, and had been cut to the soul by the wickedness of the Kappa-kappa. The general iniquity of Mary's life in London had been heavy on him. Brotherton, upon the whole, had pardoned the Dean for knocking the Marquis into the fireplace, having heard something of the true story with more or less correctness. But the chaplain's morals were sterner than those of Brotherton at large, and he was still of opinion that the Dean was a child of wrath, and poor Mary, therefore, a grandchild. Now, when he saw the Dean and his son-in-law apparently on friendly terms, the spirit of righteousness was vexed

within him as he acknowledged this to be another sign that the Dean was escaping from that punishment which alone could be of service to him in this world. "His lordship is better this morning. I hope, my lord, I have the pleasure of seeing your lordship quite well." Then Mr. Groschut passed on.

"I am not quite sure," said the Dean, as he opened his own door, "whether any good is ever done by converting a Jew."

"But St. Paul was a converted Jew," said Lord George.

"Well—yes; in those early days Christians were only to be had by converting Jews or Pagans; and in those days they did actually become Christians. But the Groschuts are a mistake." Then he called to Mary, and in a few minutes she was in her husband's arms on the staircase. The Dean did not follow them, but went into his own room on the ground-floor; and Lord George did not see him again on that day.

Lord George remained with his wife nearly all the afternoon, going out with her into the town as she did some little shopping, and being seen with her in the market-place and Close. It must be owned of Mary that she was proud thus to be seen with him again, and that in buying her ribbons and gloves she referred to him, smiling as he said this, and pouting and pretending to differ as he said that, with greater urgency than she would have done had there been no breach between them. It had been terrible to her to think that there should be a quarrel—terrible to her that the world should think

so. There was a gratification to her in feeling that even the shopkeepers should see her and her husband together. And when she met Canon Pountner and stopped a moment in the street while that worthy divine shook hands with her husband, that was an additional pleasure to her. The last few weeks had been heavy to her in spite of her father's affectionate care—heavy with a feeling of disgrace from which no well-minded young married woman can quite escape, when she is separated from her husband. She had endeavoured to do right. She thought she was doing right. But it was so sad! She was fond of pleasure, whereas he was little given to any amusement; but no pleasure could be pleasant to her now unless they were in some sort countenanced by him. She had never said such a word to a human being, but since that dancing of the Kappa-kappa she had sworn to herself a thousand times that she would never waltz again. And she hourly yearned for his company, having quite got over that first difficulty of her married life—that doubt whether she could ever learn to love her husband. During much of this day she was actually happy, in spite of the great sorrow which still weighed so heavily upon them both.

And he liked it also in his way. He thought that he had never seen her looking more lovely. He was sure that she had never been more gracious to him. The touch of her hand was pleasant to his arm, and even he had sufficient spirit of fun about him to enjoy something of the mirth of her little grimaces. When he told her what her father

had said about Mr. Groschut, even he laughed at her face of assumed disgust. "Papa doesn't hate him half as much as I do," she said. "Papa always does forgive at last, but I never can forgive Mr. Groschut."

"What has the poor man done?"

"He is so nasty! Don't you see that his face always shines. Any man with a shiny face ought to be hated." This was very well to give as a reason, but Mary entertained a very correct idea as to Mr. Groschut's opinion of herself.

Not a word had been said between the husband and wife as to the great question of residence till they had returned to the Deanery after their walk. Then Lord George found himself unable to conceal from her the offer which the Dean had made. "Oh, George—why don't you come?"

"It would not be—fitting."

"Fitting! Why not fitting? I think it would fit admirably. I know it would fit me." Then she leaned over him and took his hand and kissed it.

"It was very good of your father."

"I am sure he meant to be good."

"It was very good of your father," Lord George repeated—"very good indeed; but it cannot be. A married woman should live in her husband's house, and not in her father's."

Mary gazed into his face with a perplexed look, not quite understanding the whole question, but still with a clear idea as to a part of it. All that might be very true, but if a husband didn't happen to have a house, then might not the wife's father's

house be a convenience? They had indeed a house, provided no doubt with her money, but not the less now belonging to her husband, in which she would be very willing to live if he pleased it—the house in Munster Court. It was her husband that made objection to their own house. It was her husband who wished to live near Manor Cross, not having a roof of his own under which to do so. Were not these circumstances which ought to have made the Deanery a convenience to him? "Then what will you do?" she asked.

"I cannot say as yet." He had become again gloomy and black-browed.

"Wouldn't you come here—for a week?"

"I think not, my dear."

"Not when you know how happy it would make me to have you with me once again? I do so long to be telling you everything." Then she leant against him and embraced him, and implored him to grant her this favour. But he would not yield. He had told himself that the Dean had interfered between him and his wife, and that he must at any rate go through the ceremony of taking his wife away from her father. Let it be accorded to him that he had done that, and then perhaps he might visit the Deanery. As for her, she would have gone with him anywhere now, having fully established her right to visit her father after leaving London.

There was nothing further settled, and very little more said, when Lord George left the Deanery and started back to Manor Cross. But with Mary there

had been left a certain comfort. The shopkeepers and Dr. Pountner had seen her with her husband, and Mr. Groschut had met Lord George at the Deanery door.

CHAPTER VIII.

Rudham Park.

LORD GEORGE had undertaken to leave Manor Cross by the middle of August, but when the first week of that month had passed away he had not as yet made up his mind what he would do with himself. Mr. Knox had told him that should he remain with his mother the Marquis would not, as Mr. Knox thought, take further notice of the matter; but on such terms as these he could not consent to live in his brother's house.

On a certain day early in August Lord George had gone with a return ticket to a town but a few miles distant from Brotherton to sit on a committee for the distribution of coals and blankets, and in the afternoon got into a railway carriage on his way home. How great was his consternation when, on taking his seat, he found that his brother was seated alongside of him! There was one other old gentleman in the carriage, and the three passengers were all facing the engine. On two of the seats opposite were spread out the Marquis's travelling paraphernalia—his French novel, at which he had not looked, his dressing-bag, the box in which his luncheon had been packed, and his wine flask. There was a small basket of strawberries, should he

be inclined to eat fruit, and an early peach out of a hothouse, with some flowers. "God Almighty, George—is that you?" he said. "Where the devil have you been?"

"I've been to Grumby."

"And what are the people doing at Grumby?"

"Much the same as usual. It was the coal and blanket account."

"Oh, the coal and blanket account! I hope you liked it." Then he folded himself afresh in his cloaks, ate a strawberry, and looked as though he had taken sufficient notice of his brother.

But the matter was very important to Lord George. Nothing ever seemed to be of importance to the Marquis. It might be very probable that the Marquis, with half-a-dozen servants behind him, should drive up to the door at Manor Cross without having given an hour's notice of his intention. It seemed to be too probable to Lord George that such would be the case now. For what other reason could he be there? And then there was his back. Though they had quarrelled he was bound to ask after his brother's back. When last they two had met, the Marquis had been almost carried into the room by two men. "I hope you find yourself better than when I last saw you," he said, after a pause of five minutes.

"I have not much to boast of. I can just travel, and that's all."

"And how is—Popenjoy?"

"Upon my word I can't tell you. He has never seemed to be very well when I've seen him."

"I hope the accounts have been better," said Lord George, with solicitude.

"Coal and blanket accounts?" suggested the Marquis. And then the conversation was again brought to an end for five minutes.

But it was essential that Lord George should know whither his brother was going. If to Manor Cross, then, thought Lord George, he himself would stay at an inn at Brotherton. Anything, even the Deanery, would be better than sitting at table with his brother, with the insults of their last interview unappeased. At the end of five minutes he plucked up his courage, and asked his brother another question. "Are you going to the house, Brotherton?"

"The house! What house? I'm going to a house, I hope."

"I mean to Manor Cross."

"Not if I know it. There is no house in this part of the country in which I should be less likely to show my face." Then there was not another word said till they reached the Brotherton station, and there the Marquis, who was sitting next the door, requested his brother to leave the carriage first. "Get out, will you?" he said. "I must wait for somebody to come and take these things. And don't trample on me more than you can help." This last request had apparently been made, because Lord George was unable to step across him without treading on the cloak.

"I will say good-bye, then," said Lord George, turning round on the platform for a moment,

"Ta, ta," said the Marquis, as he gave his attention to the servant who was collecting the fruit, and the flowers, and the flask. Lord George then passed on out of the station, and saw no more of his brother.

"Of course he's going to Rudham," said Lady Susanna, when she heard the story. Rudham Park was the seat of Mr. De Baron, Mrs. Houghton's father, and tidings had reached Manor Cross long since that the Marquis had promised to go there in the autumn. No doubt other circumstances had seemed to make it improbable that the promise should be kept. Popenjoy had gone away ill—as many said, in a dying condition. Then the Marquis had been thrown into a fireplace, and report had said that his back had been all but broken. It had certainly been generally thought that the Marquis would go nowhere after that affair in the fireplace, till he returned to Italy. But Lady Susanna was, in truth, right. His lordship was on his way to Rudham Park.

Mr. De Baron, of Rudham Park, though a much older man than the Marquis, had been the Marquis's friend, when the Marquis came of age, being then the Popenjoy of those days, and a fast young man known as such about England. Mr. De Baron, who was a neighbour, had taken him by the hand. Mr. De Baron had put him in the way of buying and training race-horses, and had, perhaps, been godfather to his pleasures in other matters. Rudham Park had never been loved at Manor Cross by others than the present lord, and for that reason, perhaps,

was dearer to him. He had promised to go there soon after his return to England, and was now keeping his promise. On his arrival there the Marquis found a houseful of people. There were Mr. and Mrs. Houghton, and Lord Gibley, who, having engaged himself rashly to Miss Patmore Green, had rushed out of town sooner than usual that he might devise in retirement some means of escaping from his position; and, to Lord Gilbert's horror, there was Mrs. Montacute Jones, who, he well knew, would, if possible, keep him to the collar. There was also Aunt Julia, with her niece Guss, and of course there was Jack De Baron. The Marquis was rather glad to meet Jack, as to whom he had some hope that he might be induced to run away with Lord George's wife, and thus free the Germain family from that little annoyance. But the guest who surprised the Marquis the most, was the Baroness Banmann, whose name and occupation he did not at first learn very distinctly.

"All right again, my lord?" asked Mr. De Baron, as he welcomed his noble guest.

"Upon my word I'm not, then. That coal-heaving brute of a parson pretty nearly did for me."

"A terrible outrage it was."

"Outrage! I should think so. There's nothing so bad as a clerical bully. What was I to do with him? Of course he was the stronger. I don't pretend to be a Samson. One doesn't expect that kind of thing among gentlemen?"

"No, indeed."

"I wish I could have him somewhere with a pair of foils with the buttons off. His black coat shouldn't save his intestines. I don't know what the devil the country is come to, when such a fellow as that is admitted into people's houses."

"You won't meet him here, Brotherton."

"I wish I might. I think I'd manage to be even with him before he got away. Who's the Baroness you have got?"

"I don't know much about her. My daughter Adelaide—Mrs. Houghton, you know—has brought her down. There's been some row among the women up in London. This is one of the prophets, and I think she is brought here to spite Lady Selina Protest, who has taken an American prophetess by the hand. She won't annoy you, I hope?"

"Not in the least. I like strange wild beasts. And so that is Captain De Baron, of whom I have heard?"

"That is my nephew, Jack. He has a small fortune of his own, which he is spending fast. As long as it lasts one has to be civil to him."

"I am delighted to meet him. Don't they say he is sweet on a certain young woman?"

"A dozen, I believe."

"Ah—but one I know something of."

"I don't think there is anything in that, Brotherton—I don't, indeed, or I shouldn't have brought him here."

"I do, though. And as to not bringing him here, why shouldn't you bring him? If she don't

go off with him, she will with somebody else, and the sooner the better, according to my ideas." This was a matter upon which Mr. De Baron was not prepared to dilate, and he therefore changed the subject.

"My dear Lord Giblest, it is such a pleasure to me to meet you here," old Mrs. Jones said to that young nobleman. "When I was told you were to be at Rudham, it determined me at once." This was true, for there was no more persistent friend living than old Mrs. Jones, though it might be doubted whether, on this occasion, Lord Giblest was the friend on whose behalf she had come to Rudham.

"It's very nice, isn't it?" said Lord Giblest, gasping.

"Hadn't we a pleasant time of it with our little parties in Grosvenor Place?"

"Never liked anything so much in my life; only I don't think that fellow Jack De Baron dances so much better than other people, after all?"

"Who says he does? But I'll tell you who dances well. Olivia Green was charming in the Kappa-kappa. Don't you think so?"

"Uncommon pretty." Lord Giblest was quite willing to be understood to admire Miss Patmore Green, though he thought it hard that people should hurry him on into matrimony.

"The most graceful girl I ever saw in my life, certainly," said Mrs. Montacute Jones. "His Royal Highness, when he heard of the engagement, said that you were the happiest man in London."

Lord Gibleet could not satisfy himself by declaring that H.R.H. was an old fool, as poor Mary had done on a certain occasion — but at the present moment he did not feel at all loyal to the Royal Family generally. Nor did he, in the least, know how to answer Mrs. Jones. She had declared the engagement as a fact, and he did not quite dare to deny it altogether. He had, in an unguarded moment, when the weather had been warm and the champagne cool, said a word with so definite a meaning that the lady had been justified in not allowing it to pass by as idle. The lady had accepted him, and on the following morning he had found the lock of hair and the little stud which she had given him, and had feverish reminiscences of a kiss. But surely he was not a bird to be caught with so small a grain of salt as that! He had not as yet seen Mr. Patmore Green, having escaped from London at once. He had answered a note from Olivia, which had called him "Dearest Charlie" by a counter note, in which he had called her "Dear O," and had signed himself "Ever yours, G," promising to meet her up the river. But of course he had not gone up the river! The rest of the season might certainly be done without assistance from him. He knew that he would be pursued. He could not hope not to be pursued. But he had not thought that Mrs. Montacute Jones would be so quick upon him. It was impossible that H.R.H. should have heard of any engagement as yet. What a nasty, false, wicked old woman she was! He blushed, red as a rose, and stammered out that he "didn't know."

He was only four-and-twenty, and perhaps he didn't know.

"I never saw a girl so much in love in my life," continued Mrs. Jones. "I know her just as well as if she were my own, and she speaks to me as she doesn't dare to speak to you at present. Though she is barely twenty-one, she has been very much sought after already, and the very day she marries has ten thousand pounds in her own hands. That isn't a large fortune, and of course you don't want a large fortune; but it isn't every girl can pay such a sum straight into her husband's bank the moment she marries!"

"No, indeed," said Lord Gibleet. He was still determined that nothing should induce him to marry Miss Green; but nevertheless, behind that resolution there was a feeling that, if anything should bring about the marriage, such a sum of ready money would be a consolation. His father, the Earl of Jopling, though a very rich man, kept him a little close, and ten thousand pounds would be nice. But then perhaps the old woman was lying.

"Now I'll tell you what I want you to do," said Mrs. Jones, who was resolved that if the game were not landed it should not be her fault. "We go from here to Killancodlem next week. You must come and join us."

"I've got to go and grouse at Stranbracket's," said Lord Gibleet, happy in an excuse.

"It couldn't be better. They're both within eight miles of Dunkeld." If so, then ropes shouldn't take him to Stranbracket's that year. "Of course you'll

come. It's the prettiest place in Perth, though I say it, as oughtn't. And she will be there. If you really want to know a girl, see her in a country house."

But he didn't really want to know the girl. She was very nice, and he liked her uncommonly, but he didn't want to know anything more about her. By George! Was a man to be persecuted this way, because he had once spooned a girl a little too fiercely? As he thought of this he almost plucked up his courage sufficiently to tell Mrs. Jones that she had better pick out some other young man for deportation to Killancodlem. "I should like it ever so," he said.

"I'll take care that you shall like it, Lord Gibley. I think I may boast that when I put my wits to work I can make my house agreeable. I'm very fond of young people, but there's no one I love as I do Olivia Green. There isn't a young woman in London has so much to be loved for. Of course you'll come. What day shall we name?"

"I don't think I could name a day."

"Let us say the 27th. That will give you nearly a week at the grouse first. Be with us to dinner on the 27th."

"Well—perhaps I will."

"Of course you will. I shall write to Olivia to-night, and I daresay you will do so also."

Lord Gibley, when he was let to go, tried to suck consolation from the ten thousand pounds. Though he was still resolved, he almost believed that Mrs. Montacute Jones would conquer him. Write to

Olivia to-night! Lying, false old woman! Of course she knew that there was hardly a lady in England to whom it was so little likely that he should write as to Miss Patmore Green. How could an old woman, with one foot in the grave, be so wicked? And why should she persecute him? What had he done to her? Olivia Green was not her daughter, or even her niece. "So you are going to Killancodlem?" Mrs. Houghton said to him that afternoon.

"She has asked me," said Lord Gibley.

"It's simply the most comfortable house in all Scotland, and they tell me some of the best deer-stalking. Everybody likes to get to Killancodlem. Don't you love old Mrs. Jones?"

"Charming old woman!"

"And such a friend! If she once takes to you she never drops you."

"Sticks like wax, I should say."

"Quite like wax, Lord Gibley. And when she makes up her mind to do a thing she always does it. It's quite wonderful; but she never gets beaten."

"Doesn't she now?"

"Never. She hasn't asked us to Killancodlem yet, but I hope she will." A manly resolution now roused itself in Lord Gibley's bosom that he would be the person to beat Mrs. Jones at last. But yet he doubted. If he were asked the question by anyone having a right to ask he could not deny that he had proposed to marry Miss Patmore Green.

"So you've come down to singe your wings again?" said Mrs. Houghton to her cousin Jack.

"My wings have been burned clean away already, and, in point of fact, I am not half so near to Lady George here as I was in London."

"It's only ten miles."

"If it were five it would be the same. We're not in the same set down in Barsetshire."

"I suppose you can have yourself taken to Brotherton if you please?"

"Yes—I can call at the Deanery; but I shouldn't know what to say when I got there."

"You've become very mealy-mouthed of a sudden."

"Not with you, my sweet cousin. With you I can discuss the devil and all his works as freely as ever; but with Lady George, at her father's house, I think I should be dumb. In truth, I haven't got anything to say to her."

"I thought you had."

"I know you think so; but I haven't. It is quite on the card that I may ride over some day, as I would to see my sister."

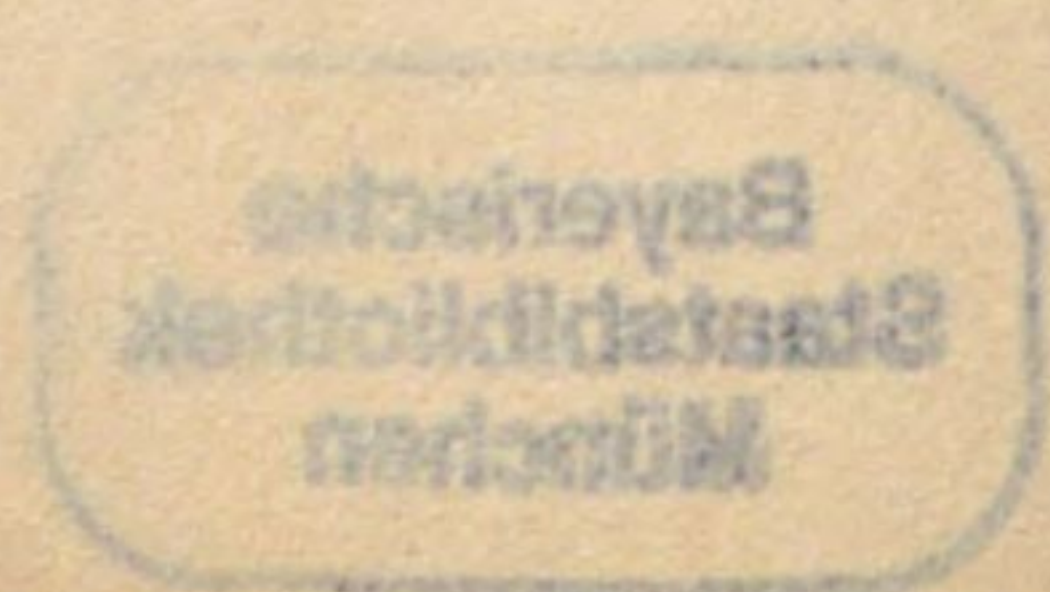
"Your sister!"

"And that I shall make eager inquiries after her horse, her pet dog, and her husband."

"You will be wrong there, for she has quarrelled with her husband altogether."

"I hope not."

"They are not living together, and never even see each other. He's at Manor Cross, and she's at the Deanery. She's a divinity to you, but Lord George seems to have found her so human that he's tired of her already."



"Then it must be his own fault."

"Or perhaps yours, Jack. You don't suppose a husband goes through a little scene like that at Mrs. Jones's without feeling it?"

"He made an ass of himself, and a man generally feels that afterwards," said Jack.

"The truth is they're tired of each other. There isn't very much in Lord George, but there is something. He is slow, but there is a certain manliness at the bottom of it. But there isn't very much in her!"

"That's all you know about it."

"Perhaps you may know her better, but I never could find anything. You confess to being in love, and of course a lover is blind. But where you are most wrong is in supposing that she is something so much better than other women. She flirted with you so frankly that she made you think her a goddess."

"She never flirted with me in her life."

"Exactly;—because flirting is bad, and she being a goddess cannot do evil. I wish you'd take her in your arms and kiss her."

"I shouldn't dare."

"No;—and therefore you're not in the way to learn that she's a woman just the same as other women. Will Mrs. Jones succeed with that stupid young man?"

"With Gible? I hope so. It can't make any difference to him whether it's this one or another, and I do like Mrs. Jones."

"Would they let me have just a little lecture in

the dining-room?" asked the Baroness of her friend, Aunt Ju. There had been certain changes among the Disabilities up in London. Lady Selina Protest had taken Dr. Olivia Q. Fleabody altogether by the hand, and had appointed her chief professor at the Institute, perhaps without sufficient authority.

Aunt Ju had been cast into the shade, and had consequently been driven to throw herself into the arms of the Baroness. At present there was a terrible feud in which Aunt Ju was being much worsted. For the Baroness was an Old Man of the Sea, and having got herself on to Aunt Ju's shoulders could not be shaken off. In the meantime Dr. Fleabody was filling the Institute, reaping golden harvest, and breaking the heart of the poor Baroness, who had fallen into much trouble and was now altogether penniless.

"I'm afraid not," said Aunt Ju. "I'm afraid we can't do that."

"Perhaps de Marquis would like it?"

"I hardly think so."

"He did say a word to me, and I tink he would like it. He vant to understand."

"My dear Baroness, I'm 'sure the Marquis of Brotherton does not care about it in the least. He is quite in the dark on such subjects—quite benighted." What was the use, thought the Baroness, of bringing her down to a house in which people were so benighted that she could not be allowed to open her mouth or carry on her profession? Had she not been enticed over from her own country in order that she might open her mouth, and preach

her doctrine, and become a great and a wealthy woman? There was a fraud in this enforced silence which cut her to the very quick. "I tink I shall try," she said, separating herself in her wrath from her friend.

CHAPTER IX.

The treatment which the Marquis received at Rudham did not certainly imply any feeling that he had done himself wrong by what he had done either in London or up in London. Perhaps the ladies there did not know as much of his habits as did Mrs. Walker at Rudham. Perhaps the feeling was strong that Popenjoy was Popenjoy, and that that for the Marquis had been injured. If a child had been in British purple—the purple, though it may have been stained by circumstances—that purple is very sacred. Perhaps it was thought that under no circumstances should a Marquis be knocked into the hospital by a chimney-sweep. There was still a good deal of mystery both as to Popenjoy and as to the Marquis, and the Marquis was the hero of the mystery. Everyone at Rudham was anxious to see by his side and to be allowed to talk to him. When he refused the door which he did freely, those who heard him assented to all he said. The Baroness Popenjoy held up her hands in horror when she heard the tale, and declared the Church to be one grand waste. Mrs. Houghton, who was very attentive to the Marquis, and whom the Marquis liked, was petitioned in her inquiries after Popenjoy, and

CHAPTER IX.

Guss Mildmay's Success.

THE treatment which the Marquis received at Rudham did not certainly imply any feeling that he had disgraced himself by what he had done either at Manor Cross or up in London. Perhaps the ladies there did not know as much of his habits as did Mrs. Walker at Scumberg's. Perhaps the feeling was strong that Popenjoy was Popenjoy, and that therefore the Marquis had been injured. If a child be born in British purple—true purple, though it may have been stained by circumstances—that purple is very sacred. Perhaps it was thought that under no circumstances should a Marquis be knocked into the fireplace by a clergyman. There was still a good deal of mystery, both as to Popenjoy and as to the fireplace, and the Marquis was the hero of these mysteries. Everyone at Rudham was anxious to sit by his side and to be allowed to talk to him. When he abused the Dean, which he did freely, those who heard him assented to all he said. The Baroness Banmann held up her hands in horror when she heard the tale, and declared the Church to be one grand *bêtise*. Mrs. Houghton, who was very attentive to the Marquis, and whom the Marquis liked, was pertinacious in her inquiries after Popenjoy, and

cruelly sarcastic upon the Dean. "Think what was his bringing up," said Mrs. Houghton.

"In a stable," said the Marquis.

"I always felt it to be a great pity that Lord George should have made that match;—not but what she is a good creature in her way."

"She is no better than she should be," said the Marquis. Then Mrs. Houghton found herself able to insinuate that perhaps, after all, Mary was not a good creature, even in her own way. But the Marquis's chief friend was Jack De Baron. He talked to Jack about races and billiards, and women; but though he did not refrain from abusing the Dean, he said no word to Jack against Mary. If it might be that the Dean should receive his punishment in that direction he would do nothing to prevent it. "They tell me she's a beautiful woman. I have never seen her myself," said the Marquis.

"She is very beautiful," said Jack.

"Why the devil she should have married George, I can't think. She doesn't care for him the least."

"Don't you think she does?"

"I am sure she don't. I suppose her pestilent father thought it was the nearest way to a coronet. I don't know why men should marry at all. They always get into trouble by it."

"Somebody must have children," suggested Jack.

"I don't see the necessity. It's nothing to me what comes of the property after I'm gone. What is it, madam?" They were sitting out on the lawn after lunch, and Jack and the Marquis were both smoking. As they were talking the Baroness had come up to

them and made her little proposition. "What! a lecture! If Mr. De Baron pleases, of course. I never listen to lectures myself—except from my wife."

"Ah! dat is vat I vant to prevent."

"I have prevented it already by sending her to Italy. Oh, rights of women! Very interesting; but I don't think I'm well enough myself. Here is Captain De Baron, a young man as strong as a horse, and very fond of women. He'll sit it out."

"I beg your pardon; what is it?" Then the Baroness, with rapid words, told her own sad story. She had been deluded, defrauded, and ruined by those wicked females, Lady Selina Protest and Dr. Fleabody. The Marquis was a nobleman whom all England, nay, all Europe, delighted to honour. Could not the Marquis do something for her? She was rapid and eloquent, but not always intelligible. "What is it she wants?" asked the Marquis, turning to Jack.

"Pecuniary assistance, I think, my lord."

"Yah, yah. I have been bamboozled of everything, my Lord Marquis."

"Oh, my G—, De Baron shouldn't have let me in for this. Would you mind telling my fellow to give her a ten-pound note?" Jack said that he would not mind; and the Baroness stuck to him pertinaciously, not leaving his side a moment till she had got the money. Of course there was no lecture. The Baroness was made to understand that visitors at a country house in England could not be made to endure such an infliction; but she succeeded in levying a contribution from Mrs. Montacute Jones,

and there were rumours afloat that she got a sovereign out of Mr. Houghton.

Lord Giblest had come with the intention of staying a week, but, the day after the attack made upon him by Mrs. Montacute Jones, news arrived which made it absolutely necessary that he should go to Castle Gosling at once. "We shall be sorry to miss you," said Mrs. Montacute Jones, whom he tried to avoid in making his general adieux, but who was a great deal too clever not to catch him.

"My father wants to see me about the property, you know."

"Of course. There must be a great deal to do between you." Everybody who knew the affairs of the family was aware that the old Earl never thought of consulting his son; and Mrs. Montacute Jones knew everything.

"Ever so much; therefore I must be off at once. My fellow is packing my things now; and there is a train in an hour's time."

"Did you hear from Olivia this morning?"

"Not to-day."

"I hope you are as proud as you ought to be of having such a sweet girl belonging to you." Nasty old woman! What right had she to say these things? "I told Mrs. Green that you were here, and that you were coming to meet Olivia on the 27th."

"What did she say?"

"She thinks you ought to see Mr. Green as you go through London. He is the easiest, most good-natured man in the world. Don't you think you

might as well speak to him?" Who was Mrs. Montacute Jones that she should talk to him in this way? "I would send a telegram, if I were you, to say I would be there to-night."

"Perhaps it would be best," said Lord Giblest.

"Oh certainly. Now mind, we expect you to dinner on the 27th. Is there anybody else you'd specially like me to ask?"

"Nobody in particular, thank ye."

"Isn't Jack De Baron a friend of yours?"

"Yes—I like Jack pretty well. He thinks a great deal of himself, you know."

"All the young men do that now. At any rate I'll ask Jack to meet you." Unfortunately for Lord Giblest, Jack appeared in sight at this very moment. "Captain De Baron, Lord Giblest has been good enough to say that he'll come to my little place at Killancodlem on the 27th. Can you meet him there?"

"Delighted, Mrs. Jones. Who ever refuses to go to Killancodlem?"

"It isn't Killancodlem and its little comforts that are bringing his lordship. We shall be delighted to see him; but he is coming to see——Well I suppose it's no secret now, Lord Giblest?" Jack bowed his congratulations, and Lord Giblest again blushed as red as a rose.

Detestable old woman! Whither should he take himself? In what farthest part of the Rocky Mountains should he spend the coming autumn? If neither Mr. nor Mrs. Green called upon him for an explana-

tion, what possible right could this abominable old harpy have to prey upon him? Just at the end of a cotillon he had said one word! He knew men who had done ten times as much and had not been as severely handled. And he was sure that Jack De Baron had had something to do with it. Jack had been hand in hand with Mrs. Jones at the making up of the Kappa-kappa. But as he went to the station he reflected that Olivia Green was a very nice girl. If those ten thousand pounds were true they would be a great comfort to him. His mother was always bothering him to get married. If he could bring himself to accept this as his fate, he would be saved a deal of trouble. Spooning at Killancodlem, after all, would not be bad fun. He almost told himself that he would marry Miss Green, were it not that he was determined not to be dictated to by that old harpidan.

Many people came and went at Rudham Park, but among those who did not go was Guss Mildmay. Aunt Julia, who had become thoroughly ashamed of the Baroness, had wished to take her departure on the third day; but Guss had managed to stop her. "What's the good of coming to a house for three days? You said you meant to stay a week. They know what she is now, and the harm's done. It was your own fault for bringing her. I don't see why I'm to be thrown over because you've made a mistake about a vulgar old woman. We've nowhere to go to till November, and now we are out of town for heaven's sake let us stay as long as we can." In this way Guss carried her point,

watching her opportunity for a little conversation with her former lover.

At last the opportunity came. It was not that Jack had avoided her, but that it was necessary that she should be sure of having half an hour alone with him. At last she made the opportunity, calling upon him to walk with her one Sunday morning, when all other folk were in church, or perhaps in bed. "No, I won't go to church," she had said to Aunt Ju. "What is the use of your asking 'why not?' I won't go. They are quite accustomed at Rudham to people not going to church. I always go in a stiff house, but I won't go here. When you are at Rome you should do as the Romans do. I don't suppose there'll be half a dozen there out of the whole party." Aunt Ju went to church as a matter of course, and the opportunity of walking in the grounds with Jack was accomplished. "Are you going to Killancodlem?" she said.

"I suppose I shall, for a few days."

"Have you got anything to say before you go?"

"Nothing particular."

"Of course I don't mean to me."

"I've nothing particular to say to anybody just at present. Since I've been here that wretched old Marquis has been my chief fate. It's quite a pleasure to hear him abuse the Dean."

"And the Dean's daughter?"

"He has not much good to say about her either."

"I'm not surprised at that, Jack. And what do you say to him about the Dean's daughter?"

"Very little, Guss."

"And what are you going to say to me about her?"

"Nothing at all, Guss."

"She's all the world to you, I suppose?"

"What's the use of your saying that? In one sense she's nothing to me. My belief is that the only man she'll ever care a pin about is her husband. At any rate, she does not care a straw for me."

"Nor you for her?"

"Well—yes I do. She's one of my pet friends. There's nobody I like being with better."

"And if she were not married?"

"God knows what might have happened. I might have asked her to have me, because she has got money of her own. What's the use of coming back to the old thing, Guss?"

"Money, money, money!"

"Nothing more unfair was ever said to anyone. Have I given any signs of selling myself for money? Have I been a fortune-hunter? No one has ever found me guilty of so much prudence. All I say is that having found out the way to go to the devil myself, I won't take any young woman I like with me there by marrying her. Heavens and earth! I can fancy myself returned from a wedding-tour with some charmer, like you, without a shilling at my banker's and beginning life at lodgings, somewhere down at Chelsea. Have you no imagination? Can't you see what it would be? Can't you fancy

the stuffy sitting-room with the horsehair chairs, and the hashed mutton, and the cradle in the corner before long?"

"No I can't," said Guss.

"I can; two cradles, and very little of the hashed mutton; and my lady wife with no one to pin her dress for her but the maid-of-all-work with black fingers."

"It wouldn't be like that."

"It very soon would, if I were free to marry a girl without a fortune. And I know myself. I'm a very good fellow while the sun shines, but I couldn't stand hardship. I shouldn't come home to the hashed mutton. I should dine at the club, even though I had to borrow the money. I should come to hate the cradle and its occupant, and the mother of its occupant. I should take to drink, and should blow my brains out just as the second cradle came. I can see it all as plain as a pikestaff. I often lie awake the whole night and look at it. You and I, Guss, have made a mistake from the beginning. Being poor people we have lived as though we were rich."

"I have never done so."

"Oh yes, you have. Instead of dining out in Fitzroy Square and drinking tea in Tavistock Place, you have gone to balls in Grosvenor Square and been presented at Court."

"It wasn't my fault."

"It has been so, and therefore you should have made up your mind to marry a rich man."

"Who was it asked me to love him?"

"Say that I did if you please. Upon my word I forget how it began, but say that it was my fault. Of course it was my fault. Are you going to blow me up for that? I see a girl, and first like her, and then I love her, and then I tell her so; or else she finds it out without my telling. Was that a sin you can't forgive?"

"I never said it was a sin."

"I don't mind being a worm, but I won't be trodden upon overmuch. Was there ever a moment in which you thought that I thought of marrying you?"

"A great many, Jack."

"Did I ever say so?"

"Never. I'll do you justice there. You have been very cautious."

"Of course you can be severe, and of course I am bound to bear it. I have been cautious—for your sake!"

"Oh, Jack!"

"For your sake. When I first saw how it was going to be—how it might be between you and me—I took care to say outright that I couldn't marry unless a girl had money."

"There will be something—when papa dies."

"The most healthy middle-aged gentleman in London! There might be half-a-dozen cradles, Guss, before that day. If it will do you good, you shall say I'm the greatest rascal walking."

"That will do me no good."

"But I don't know that I can give you any other privilege."

Then there was a long pause, during which they were sauntering together under an old oak-tree in the park. "Do you love me, Jack?" she then asked, standing close up to him.

"God bless my soul! That's going back to the beginning."

"You are heartless—absolutely heartless. It has come to that with you that any real idea of love is out of the question."

"I can't afford it, my dear."

"But is there no such thing as love that you can't help? Can you drop a girl out of your heart altogether simply because she has got no money? I suppose you did love me once?" Here Jack scratched his head. "You did love me once?" she said, persevering with her question.

"Of course I did," said Jack, who had no objection to make assurances of the past.

"And you don't now?"

"Whoever said so? What's the good of talking about it?"

"Do you think you owe me nothing?"

"What's the good of owing, if a man can't pay his debts?"

"You will own nothing then?"

"Yes, I will. If anyone left me twenty thousand pounds to-morrow, then I should owe you something."

"What would you owe me?"

"Half of it."

"And how would you pay me?" He thought awhile before he made his answer. He knew that

in that case he would not wish to pay the debt in the only way in which it would be payable. "You mean then that you would—marry me?"

"I shouldn't be afraid of the hashed mutton and cradles."

"In that case you—would marry me?"

"A man has no right to take so much on himself as to say that."

"Psha!"

"I suppose I should. I should make a devilish bad husband even then."

"Why should you be worse than others?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I was made worse. I can't fancy myself doing any duty well. If I had a wife of my own I should be sure to fall in love with somebody else's."

"Lady George for instance."

"No—not Lady George. It would not be with somebody whom I had learned to think the very best woman in all the world. I am very bad, but I'm not just bad enough to make love to her. Or rather I am very foolish, but not just foolish enough to think that I could win her."

"I suppose she's just the same as others, Jack."

"She's not just the same to me. But I'd rather not talk about her, Guss. I'm going to Killancodlem in a day or two, and I shall leave this to-morrow."

"To-morrow!"

"Well—yes—to-morrow. I must be a day or two in town, and there is not much doing here. I'm tired of the old Marquis, who is the most ill-natured brute I ever came across in my life, and

there's no more fun to be made of the Baroness. I'm not sure but that she has the best of the fun. I didn't think there was an old woman in the world could get a five-pound note out of me; but she has."

"How could you be so foolish?"

"How, indeed! You'll go back to London?"

"I suppose so—unless I drown myself."

"Don't do that, Guss?"

"I often think it will be best. You don't know what my life is—how wretched. And you made it so."

"Is that fair, Guss?"

"Quite fair! Quite true! You have made it miserable. You know you have. Of course you know it."

"Can I help it now?"

"Yes you can. I can be patient if you will say that it shall be some day. I could put up with anything if you would let me hope. When you have got that twenty thousand pounds——?"

"But I shall never have it."

"If you do—will you marry me then? Will you promise me that you will never marry anybody else?"

"I never shall."

"But will you promise me? If you will not say so much as that to me you must be false indeed. When you have the twenty thousand pounds will you marry me?"

"Oh, certainly."

"And you can laugh about such a matter when

I am pouring out my very soul to you? You can make a joke of it when it is all my life to me! Jack, if you will say that it shall happen some day—some day—I will be happy. If you won't—I can only die. It may be play to you, but it's death to me." He looked at her, and saw that she was quite in earnest. She was not weeping, but there was a drawn, heavy look about her face which, in truth, touched his heart. Whatever might be his faults he was not a cruel man. He had defended himself without any scruples of conscience when she had seemed to attack him, but now he did not know how to refuse her request. It amounted to so little! "I don't suppose it will ever take place, but I think I ought to allow myself to consider myself as engaged to you," she said.

"As it is you are free to marry anyone else," he replied.

"I don't care for such freedom. I don't want it. I couldn't marry a man whom I didn't love."

"Nobody knows what they can do till they're tried."

"Do you suppose, sir, I've never been tried? But I can't bring myself to laugh now, Jack. Don't joke now. Heaven knows when we may see each other again. You will promise me that, Jack?"

"Yes—if you wish it." And so at last she had got a promise from him! She said nothing more to fix it, fearing that in doing so she might lose it; but she threw herself into his arms and buried her face upon his bosom.

Afterwards, when she was leaving him, she was

very solemn in her manner to him. "I will say good-bye now, Jack, for I shall hardly see you again to speak to. You do love me?"

"You know I do."

"I am so true to you! I have always been true to you. God bless you, Jack. Write me a line sometimes." Then he escaped, having brought her back to the garden among the flowers, and he wandered away by himself across the park. At last he had engaged himself. He knew that it was so, and he knew that she would tell all her friends. Adelaide Houghton would know, and would, of course, congratulate him. There never could be a marriage. That would, of course, be out of the question. But, instead of being the Jack De Baron of old, at any rate free as air, he would be the young man engaged to marry Augusta Mildmay. And then he could hardly now refuse to answer the letters which she would be sure to write to him, at least twice a week. There had been a previous period of letter-writing, but that had died a natural death through utter neglect on his part. But now—— It might be as well that he should take advantage of the new law and exchange into an Indian regiment.

But, even in his present condition, his mind was not wholly occupied with Augusta Mildmay. The evil words which had been spoken to him of Mary had not been altogether fruitless. His cousin Adelaide had told him over and over again that Lady George was as other women—by which his cousin had intended to say that Lady George was the same as herself. Augusta Mildmay had spoken of his Phoenix

in the same strain. The Marquis had declared her to be utterly worthless. It was not that he wished to think of her as they thought, or that he could be brought so to think; but these suggestions, coming as they did from those who knew how much he liked the woman, amounted to ridicule aimed against the purity of his worship. They told him—almost told him—that he was afraid to speak of love to Lady George. Indeed he was afraid, and within his own breast he was in some sort proud of his fear. But, nevertheless, he was touched by their ridicule. He and Mary had certainly been dear friends. Certainly that friendship had given great umbrage to her husband. Was he bound to keep away from her because of her husband's anger? He knew that they two were not living together. He knew that the Dean would at any rate welcome him. And he knew, too, that there was no human being he wished to see again so much as Lady George. He had no purpose as to anything that he would say to her, but he was resolved that he would see her. If then some word warmer than any he had yet spoken should fall from him, he would gather from her answer what her feelings were towards him. In going back to London on the morrow he must pass by Brotherton, and he would make his arrangements so as to remain there for an hour or two.

CHAPTER X.

Another Love.

THE party at Rudham Park had hardly been a success—nor was it much improved in wit or gaiety when Mrs. Montacute Jones, Lord Gibley, and Jack De Baron had gone away, and Canon Holdenough and his wife, with Mr. Groschut, had come in their places. This black influx, as Lord Brotherton called it, had all been due to consideration for his lordship. Mr. De Baron thought that his guest would like to see, at any rate, one of his own family, and Lady Alice Holdenough was the only one whom he could meet. As to Mr. Groschut, he was the Dean's bitterest enemy, and would, therefore, it was thought, be welcome. The Bishop had been asked, as Mr. De Baron was one who found it expedient to make sacrifices to respectability; but, as was well known, the Bishop never went anywhere except to clerical houses. Mr. Groschut, who was a younger man, knew that it behoved him to be all things to all men, and that he could not be efficacious among sinners unless he would allow himself to be seen in their paths. Care was, of course, taken that Lady Alice should find herself alone with her brother. It was probably expected that the Marquis would be regarded as less of an ogre in the country if it were

known that he had had communication with one of the family without quarrelling with her. "So you're come here," he said. "I didn't know that people so pious would enter De Baron's doors."

"Mr. De Baron is a very old friend of the Canon's. I hope he isn't very wicked, and I'm afraid we are not very pious."

"If you don't object, of course I don't. So they've all gone back to the old house?"

"Mamma is there."

"And George?" he asked in a sharp tone.

"And George—at present."

"George is, I think, the biggest fool I ever came across in my life. He is so cowed by that man whose daughter he has married that he doesn't know how to call his soul his own."

"I don't think that, Brotherton. He never goes to the Denery to stay there."

"Then what makes him quarrel with me? He ought to know on which side his bread is buttered."

"He has a great deal of money with her, you know."

"If he thinks his bread is buttered on that side, let him stick to that side and say so. I will regard none of my family as on friendly terms with me who associate with the Dean of Brotherton or his daughter after what took place up in London." Lady Alice felt this to be a distinct threat to herself, but she allowed it to pass by without notice. She was quite sure that the Canon would not quarrel with the Dean out of deference to his brother-in-law. "The fact is, they should all have gone away as I told

them, and especially when George had married the girl and got her money. It don't make much difference to me, but it will make a deal to him."

"How is Popenjoy, Brotherton?" asked Lady Alice, anxious to change the conversation.

"I don't know anything about him."

"What!"

"He has gone back to Italy with his mother. How can I tell? Ask the Dean. I don't doubt that he knows all about him. He has people following them about, and watching every mouthful they eat."

"I think he has given all that up."

"Not he. He'll have to, unless he means to spend more money than I think he has got."

"George is quite satisfied about Popenoy now," said Lady Alice.

"I fancy George didn't like the expense. But he began it, and I'll never forgive him. I fancy it was he and Sarah between them. They'll find that they will have had the worst of it. The poor little beggar hadn't much life in him. Why couldn't they wait?"

"Is it so bad as that, Brotherton?"

"They tell me he is not a young Hercules. Oh yes—you can give my love to my mother. Tell her that if I don't see her it is all George's fault. I am not going to the house while he's there." To the Canon he hardly spoke a word, nor was the Canon very anxious to talk to him. But it became known throughout the country that the Marquis had met his

sister at Rudham Park, and the general effect was supposed to be good.

"I shall go back to-morrow, De Baron," he said to his host that same afternoon. This was the day on which Jack had gone to Brotherton.

"We shall be sorry to lose you. I'm afraid it has been rather dull."

"Not more dull than usual. Everything is dull after a certain time of life unless a man has made some fixed line for himself. Some men can eat and drink a great deal, but I haven't got stomach for that. Some men play cards; but I didn't begin early enough to win money, and I don't like losing it. The sort of things that a man does care for die away from him, and of course it becomes dull."

"I wonder you don't have a few horses in training."

"I hate horses, and I hate being cheated."

"They don't cheat me," said Mr. de Baron.

"Ah—very likely. They would me. I think I made a mistake, De Baron, in not staying at home and looking after the property."

"It's not too late, now."

"Yes it is. I could not do it. I could not remember the tenants' names, and I don't care about game. I can't throw myself into a litter of young foxes, or get into a fury of passion about pheasants' eggs. It's all beastly nonsense, but if a fellow could only bring himself to care about it that wouldn't matter. I don't care about anything."

"You read."

"No, I don't. I pretend to read—a little. If they had left me alone I think I should have had myself bled to death in a warm bath. But I won't now. That man's daughter shan't be Lady Brother-ton if I can help it. I have rather liked being here on the whole, though why the d—— you should have a German impostor in your house, and a poor clergyman, I can't make out.

"He's the Deputy-Bishop of the diocese."

"But why have the Bishop himself unless he happen to be a friend? Does your daughter like her marriage?"

"I hope so. She does not complain."

"He's an awful ass—and always was. I remember when you used always to finish up your books by making him bet as you pleased."

"He always won."

"And now you've made him marry your daughter. Perhaps he has won there. I like her. If my wife would die and he would die, we might get up another match and cut out Lord George after all." This speculation was too deep even for Mr. De Baron, who laughed and shuffled himself about, and got out of the room.

"Wouldn't you have liked to be a marchioness," he said, some hours afterwards, to Mrs. Houghton. She was in the habit of sitting by him and talking to him late in the evening, while he was sipping his curaçoa and soda-water, and had become accustomed to hear odd things from him. He liked her because he could say what he pleased to her, and she would laugh and listen, and show no offence. But this last

question was very odd. Of course she thought that it referred to the old overtures made to her by Lord George; but in that case, had she married Lord George, she could only have been made a marchioness by his own death—by that and by the death of the little Popenjoy of whom she had heard so much.

"If it had come in my way fairly," she said with an arch smile.

"I don't mean that you should have murdered anybody. Suppose you had married me?"

"You never asked me, my lord."

"You were only eight or nine years old when I saw you last."

"Isn't it a pity you didn't get yourself engaged to me then? Such things have been done."

"If the coast were clear I wonder whether you'd take me now?"

"The coast isn't clear, Lord Brotherton."

"No, by George. I wish it were, and so do you too, if you'd dare to say so."

"You think I should be sure to take you."

"I think you would. I should ask you at any rate. I'm not so old by ten years as Houghton."

"Your age would not be the stumbling-block."

"What then?"

"I didn't say there would be any. I don't say that there would not. It's a kind of thing that a woman doesn't think of."

"It's just the kind of thing that women do think of."

"Then they don't talk about it, Lord Brother-

ton. Your brother, you know, did want me to marry him."

"What, George? Before Houghton?"

"Certainly — before I had thought of Mr. Houghton."

"Why the deuce did you refuse him? Why did you let him take that little——" He did not fill up the blank, but Mrs. Houghton quite understood that she was to suppose everything that was bad. "I never heard of this before."

"It wasn't for me to tell you."

"What an ass you were."

"Perhaps so. What should we have lived upon? Papa would not have given us an income."

"I could."

"But you wouldn't. You didn't know me then."

"Perhaps you'd have been just as keen as she is to rob my boy of his name. And so George wanted to marry you! Was he very much in love?"

"I was bound to suppose so, my lord."

"And you didn't care for him!"

"I didn't say that. But I certainly did not care to set up housekeeping without a house or without the money to get one. Was I wrong?"

"I suppose a fellow ought to have money when he wants to marry. Well, my dear, there is no knowing what may come yet. Won't it be odd, if after all, you should be Marchioness of Brotherton some

day? After that won't you give me a kiss before you say good-night?"

"I would have done if you had been my brother-in-law—or perhaps, if the people were not all moving about in the next room. Good-night, Marquis."

"Good-night. Perhaps you'll regret some day that you haven't done what I asked."

"I might regret it more if I did."

Then she took herself off, inquiring in her own mind whether it might still be possible that she should ever preside in the drawing-room at Manor Cross. Had he not been very much in love with her, surely he would not have talked to her like that.

"I think I'll say good-bye to you, De Baron," the Marquis said to his host that night.

"You won't be going early."

"No; I never do anything early. But I don't like a fuss just as I am going. I'll get down and drive away to catch some train. My man will manage it all."

"You go to London?"

"I shall be in Italy within a week. I hate Italy, but I think I hate England worse. If I believed in heaven and thought I were going there, what a hurry I should be in to die."

"Let us know how Popenjoy is."

"You'll be sure to know whether he is dead or alive. There's nothing else to tell. I never write letters except to Knox, and very few to him. Good-night."

When the Marquis was in his room, his courier, or the man so called, came to undress him. "Have you heard anything to-day?" he asked in Italian. The man said that he had heard. A letter had reached him that afternoon from London. The letter had declared that little Popenjoy was sinking. "That will do, Bonni," he said. "I will get into bed by myself." Then he sat down and thought of himself, and his life, and his prospects—and of the prospects of his enemies.

CHAPTER XI.

Poor Popenjoy!

ON the following morning the party at Rudham Park were assembled at breakfast between ten and eleven. It was understood that the Marquis was gone, or going. The Mildmays were still there, with the Baroness, and the Houghtons, and the black influx from the cathedral town. A few other newcomers had arrived on the previous day. Mr. Groschut, who was sitting next to the Canon, had declared his opinion that, after all, the Marquis of Brotherton was a very affable nobleman. "He's civil enough," said the Canon, "when people do just what he wants."

"A man of his rank and position of course expects to have some deference paid to him."

"A man of his rank and position should be very careful of the rights of others, Mr. Groschut."

"I'm afraid his brother did make himself troublesome. You're one of the family, Canon, and therefore, of course, know all about it."

"I know nothing at all about it, Mr. Groschut."

"But it must be acknowledged that the Dean behaved very badly. Violence!—personal violence! And from a clergyman—to a man of his rank!"

"You probably don't know what took place in

that room. I'm sure I don't. But I'd rather trust the Dean than the Marquis any day. The Dean's a man!"

"But is he a clergyman?"

"Of course he is; and a father. If he had been very much in the wrong we should have heard more about it through the police.

"I cannot absolve a clergyman for using personal violence," said Mr. Groschut, very grandly. "He should have borne anything sooner than degrade his sacred calling." Mr. Groschut had hoped to extract from the Canon some expression adverse to the Dean, and to be able to assure himself that he had enrolled a new ally.

"Poor dear little fellow!" aunt Ju was saying to Mrs. Holdenough. Of course she was talking of Popenjoy. "And you never saw him?"

"No; I never saw him.

"I am told he was a lovely child."

"Very dark, I fancy."

"And all those—those doubts? They're all over now?"

"I never knew much about it, Miss Mildmay. I never inquired into it. For myself, I always took it for granted that he was Popenjoy. I think one always does take things for granted till somebody proves that it is not so."

"The Dean, I take it, has given it up altogether now," said Mrs. Houghton to old Lady Brabazon, who had come down especially to meet her nephew, the Marquis, but who had hardly dared to speak a word to him on the previous evening, and was now

told that he was gone. Lady Brabazon for a week or two had been quite sure that Popenjoy was not Popenjoy, being at that time under the influence of a very strong letter from Lady Sarah. But, since that, a general idea had come to prevail that the Dean was wrong-headed, and Lady Brabazon had given in her adhesion to Popenjoy. She had gone so far as to call at Scumberg's, and to leave a box of bonbons.

"I hope so, Mrs. Houghton; I do hope so. Quarrels are such dreadful things in families. Brotherton isn't, perhaps, all that he might have been."

"Not a bad fellow, though, after all."

"By no means, Mrs. Houghton, and quite what he ought to be in appearance. I always thought that George was very foolish."

"Lord George is foolish—sometimes."

"Very stubborn, you know, and pigheaded. And as for the Dean—it was great interference on his part, very great interference. I won't say that I like foreigners myself. I should be very sorry if Brabazon were to marry a foreigner. But if he chooses to do so I don't see why he is to be told that his heir isn't his heir. They say she is a very worthy woman, and devoted to him." At this moment the butler came in and whispered a word to Mr. De Baron, who immediately got up from his chair. "So my nephew hasn't gone," said Lady Brabazon. "That was a message from him. I heard his name."

Her ears had been correct. The summons which Mr. De Baron obeyed had come from the Marquis. He went upstairs at once, and found Lord Brother-

ton sitting in his dressing-gown, with a cup of chocolate before him, and a bit of paper in his hand. He did not say a word, but handed the paper, which was a telegram to Mr. De Baron. As the message was in Italian, and as Mr. De Baron did not read the language, he was at a loss. "Ah! you don't understand it," said the Marquis. "Give it me. It's all over with little Popenjoy."

"Dead!" said Mr. De Baron.

"Yes. He has got away from all his troubles, lucky dog! He'll never have to think what he'll do with himself. They'd almost told me that it must be so before he went."

"I grieve for you greatly, Brotherton."

"There's no use in that, old fellow. I'm sorry to be a bother to you, but I thought it best to tell you. I don't understand much about what people call grief. I can't say that I was particularly fond of him, or that I shall personally miss him. They hardly ever brought him to me, and when they did, it bothered me. And yet, somehow it pinches me—it pinches me."

"Of course it does."

"It will be such a triumph to the Dean and George. That's about the worst of it. But they haven't got it yet. Though I should be the most miserable dog on earth I'll go on living as long as I can keep my body and soul together. I'll have another son yet, if one is to be had for love or money. They shall have trouble enough before they find themselves at Manor Cross."

"The Dean'll be dead before that time—and so shall I," said Mr. De Baron.

"Poor little boy! You never saw him. They didn't bring him in when you were over at Manor Cross?"

"No—I didn't see him."

"They weren't very proud of showing him. He wasn't much to look at. Upon my soul I don't know whether he was legitimate or not, according to English fashions." Mr. De Baron stared. "They had something to stand upon, but—damn it—they went about it in such a dirty way! It don't matter now, you know, but you needn't repeat all this."

"Not a word," said Mr. De Baron, wondering why such a communication should have been made to him.

"And there was plenty of ground for a good fight. I hardly know whether she had been married or not. I never could quite find out." Again Mr. De Baron stared. "It's all over now."

"But if you were to have another son?"

"Oh! we're married now! There were two ceremonies. I believe the Dean knows quite as much about it as I do—very likely more. What a rumpus there has been about a rickety brat who was bound to die."

"Am I to tell them downstairs?"

"Yes—you might as well tell them. Wait till I'm gone. They'd say I'd concealed it if I didn't let them know, and I certainly shan't write. There's no Popenjoy now. If that young woman has a son he can't be Popenjoy as long as I live. I'll take care

of myself. By George I will! Fancy, if the Dean had killed me. He'd have made his own daughter a marchioness."

"But he'd have been hung."

"Then I wish he'd done it. I wonder how it would have gone. There was nobody there to see, nor to hear. We'll—I believe I'll think of going. There's a train at two. You'll let me have a carriage; won't you?"

"Certainly."

"Let me go out some back way, and don't say a word about this till I'm off. I wouldn't have them condoling with me, and rejoicing in their sleeves, for a thousand pounds. Tell Holdenough, or my sister—that'll be enough. Good-bye. If you want ever to see me again, you must come to Como." Then Mr. De Baron took his leave, and the Marquis prepared for his departure.

As he was stepping into the carriage at the side door he was greeted by Mr. Groschut. "So your lordship is leaving us," said the Chaplain. The Marquis looked at him, muttered something, and snarled as he hurried up the step of the carriage. "I'm sorry that we are to lose your lordship so soon." Then there was another snarl. "I had one word I wanted to say."

"To me! What can you have to say to me?"

"If at any time I can do anything for your lordship at Brotherton——"

"You can't do anything. Go on." The last direction was given to the coachman, and the

carriage was driven off, leaving Mr. Groschut on the path.

Before lunch everybody in the house knew that poor little Popenjoy was dead, and that the Dean had, in fact, won the battle—though not in the way that he had sought to win it. Lord Brotherton had, after a fashion, been popular at Rudham, but nevertheless, it was felt by them all that Lady George was a much greater woman to-day than she had been yesterday. It was felt also that the Dean was in the ascendant. The Marquis had been quite agreeable, making love to the ladies, and fairly civil to the gentlemen—excepting Mr. Groschut; but he certainly was not a man likely to live to eighty. He was married, and, as was generally understood, separated from his wife. They might all live to see Lady George Marchioness of Brotherton and a son of hers Lord Popenjoy.

“Dead!” said Lady Brabazon, when Lady Alice, with sad face, whispered to her the fatal news.

“He got a telegram this morning from Italy. Poor little boy!”

“And what’ll he do now—the Marquis, I mean?”

“I suppose he’ll follow his wife,” said Lady Alice.

“Was he much cut up?”

“I didn’t see him. He merely sent me word by Mr. De Baron.” Mr. De Baron afterwards assured Lady Brabazon that the poor father had been very much cut up. Great pity was expressed throughout the party, but there was not one there who would not now have been civil to poor Mary.

The Marquis had his flowers, and his fruit, and his French novels on his way up to town, and kept his sorrow, if he felt it, very much to himself. Soon after his arrival at Scumberg's, at which place they were obliged to take him in as he was still paying for his rooms, he made it known that he should start for Italy in a day or two. On that night and on the next he did not go out in his brougham, nor did he give any offence to Mrs. Walker. London was as empty as London ever is, and nobody came to see him. For two days he did not leave his room, the same room in which the Dean had nearly killed him, and received nobody but his tailor and his hairdresser. I think that, in his way, he did grieve for the child who was gone, and who, had he lived, would have been the intended heir of his title and property. They must now all go from him to his enemies! And the things themselves were to himself of so very little value! Living alone at Scumberg's was not a pleasant life. Even going out in his brougham at nights was not very pleasant to him. He could do as he liked at Como, and people wouldn't grumble—but what was there even at Como that he really liked to do? He had a half-worn-out taste for scenery which he had no longer energy to gratify by variation. It had been the resolution of his life to live without control, and now, at four-and-forty, he found that the life he had chosen was utterly without attraction. He had been quite in earnest in those regrets as to shooting, hunting, and the duties of an English country life. Though he was free from remorse, not believing in anything good, still

he was open to a conviction that had he done what other people call good, he would have done better for himself. Something of envy stirred him as he read the records of a nobleman whose political life had left him no moment of leisure for his private affairs; something of envy when he heard of another whose cattle were the fattest in the land. He was connected with Lord Grassangrains, and had always despised that well-known breeder of bullocks; but he could understand now that Lord Grassangrains should wish to live, whereas life to him was almost unbearable. Lord Grassangrains probably had a good appetite.

On the last morning of his sojourn at Scumberg's he received two or three letters which he would willingly have avoided by running away had it been possible. The first he opened was from his old mother, who had not herself troubled him much with letters for some years past. It was as follows:

"DEAREST BROTHERTON,—I have heard about poor Popenjoy, and I am so unhappy. Darling little fellow! We are all very wretched here, and I have nearly cried my eyes out. I hope you won't go away without seeing me. If you'll let me, I'll go up to London, though I haven't been there for I don't know how long. But perhaps you will come here to your own house. I do so wish you would.

"Your most affectionate mother,

"H. BROTHERTON.

"P.S.—Pray don't turn George out at the end of the month."

This he accepted without anger as being natural, but threw aside as being useless. Of course he would not answer it. They all knew that he never answered their letters. As to the final petition, he had nothing to say to it.

The next was from Lord George, and shall also be given.

"MR DEAR BROTHERTON,—I cannot let the tidings which I have just heard pass by without expressing my sympathy. I am very sorry indeed that you should have lost your son. I trust you will credit me for saying so much with absolute truth.

"Your always,

"GEORGE GERMAIN."

"I don't believe a word of it," he said almost out loud. To his thinking it was almost impossible that what his brother said should be true. Why should he be sorry—he that had done his utmost to prove that Popenjoy was not Popenjoy? He crunched the letter up and cast it on one side. Of course he would not answer that.

The third was from a new correspondent; and that also the reader shall see.

"MY DEAR LORD MARQUIS,—Pray believe that had I known under what great affliction you were labouring when you left Rudham Park I should have been the last man in the world to intrude myself upon you. Pray believe me also when I say that I have heard of your great bereavement with sincere

sympathy, and that I condole with you from the bottom of my heart. Pray remember, my dear lord, that if you will turn aright for consolation you certainly will not turn in vain.

"Let me add, though this is hardly the proper moment for such allusion, that both his lordship the Bishop and myself were most indignant when we heard of the outrage committed upon you at your hotel. I make no secret of my opinion that the present Dean of Brotherton ought to be called upon by the great Council of the Nation to vacate his promotion. I wish that the bench of bishops had the power to take him from his frock.

"I have the honour to be,

"My Lord Marquis,

"With sentiments of most unfeigned respect,

"Your lordship's most humble servant,

"JOSEPH GROSCHUT."

The Marquis smiled as he also threw this letter into the waste-paper basket, telling himself that birds of that feather very often did fall out with one another.

CHAPTER XII.

Jack de Baron's Virtue.

WE must now go back to Jack De Baron, who left Rudham Park the same day as the Marquis—having started before the news of Lord Popenjoy's death had been brought downstairs by Mr. De Baron. Being only Jack De Baron he had sent to Brother-ton for a fly, and in that conveyance he had himself taken to "The Lion," arriving there three or four hours before the time at which he purposed to leave the town. Indeed his arrangements had intentionally been left so open that he might if he liked remain the night—or if he pleased, remain a week at "The Lion." He thought it not improbable that the Dean might ask him to dinner, and, if so, he certainly would dine with the Dean.

He was very serious—considering who he was we may almost say solemn, as he sat in the fly. It was the rule of his life to cast all cares from him, and his grand principle to live from hand to mouth. He was almost a philosopher in his epicureanism, striving always that nothing should trouble him. But now he had two great troubles, which he could not throw off from him. In the first place, after having striven against it for the last four or five years with singular success, he had in a moment of weakness

allowed himself to become engaged to Guss Mildmay. She had gone about it so subtly that he had found himself manacled almost before he knew that the manacles were there. He had fallen into the trap of an hypothesis, and now felt that the preliminary conditions on which he had seemed to depend could never avail him. He did not mean to marry Guss Mildmay. He did not suppose that she thought he meant to marry her. He did not love her, and he did not believe very much in her love for him. But Guss Mildmay, having fought her battle in the world for many years with but indifferent success, now felt that her best chance lay in having a bond upon her old lover. He ought not to have gone to Rudham when he knew that she was to be there. He had told himself that before, but he had not liked to give up the only chance which had come in his way of being near Lady George since she had left London. And now he was an engaged man—a position which had always been to him full of horrors. He had run his bark on to the rock, which it had been the whole study of his navigation to avoid. He had committed the one sin which he had always declared to himself that he never would commit. This made him unhappy.

And he was uneasy also—almost unhappy—respecting Lady George. People whom he knew to be bad had told him things respecting her which he certainly did not believe, but which he did not find it compatible with his usual condition of life altogether to disbelieve. If he had ever loved any

woman he loved her. He certainly respected her as he had never respected any other young woman. He had found the pleasure to be derived from her society to be very different from that which had come from his friendship with others. With her he could be perfectly innocent, and at the same time completely happy. To dance with her, to ride with her, to walk with her, to sit with the privilege of looking at her, was joy of itself, and required nothing beyond. It was a delight to him to have any little thing to do for her. When his daily life was in any way joined with hers there was a brightness in it which he thoroughly enjoyed though he did not quite understand. When that affair of the dance came, in which Lord George had declared his jealousy, he had been in truth very unhappy because she was unhappy, and he had been thoroughly angry with the man, not because the man had interfered with his own pleasures, but because of the injury and the injustice done to his wife. He found himself wounded, really hurt, because she had been made subject to calumny. When he tried to analyse the feeling he could not understand it. It was so different from anything that had gone before! He was sure that she liked him, and yet there was a moment in which he thought that he would purposely keep out of her way for the future, lest he might be a trouble to her. He loved her so well that his love for awhile almost made him unselfish.

And yet—yet he might be mistaken about her. It had been the theory of his life that young married women became tired of their husbands, and

one of his chief doctrines that no man should ever love in such a way as to believe in the woman he loves. After so many years, was he to give up his philosophy? Was he to allow the ground to be cut from under his feet by a young creature of twenty-one who had been brought up in a country town? Was he to run away because a husband had taken it into his head to be jealous? All the world had given him credit for his behaviour at the Kappa-kappa. He had gathered laurels—very much because he was supposed to be the lady's lover. He had never boasted to others of the lady's favour; but he knew that she liked him, and he had told himself that he would be poor-spirited if he abandoned her.

He drove up to "The Lion" and ordered a room. He did not know whether he should want it, but he would at any rate bespeak it. And he ordered his dinner. Come what come might, he thought that he would dine and sleep at Brotherton that day. Finding himself so near to Lady George, he would not leave her quite at once. He asked at the inn whether the Dean was in Brotherton. Yes; the Dean was certainly at the Deanery. He had been seen about in the city that morning. The inhabitants, when they talked about Brotherton, always called it the city. And were Lord George and Lady George at the Deanery? In answer to this question, the landlady with something of a lengthened face declared that Lady George was with her papa, but that Lord George was at Manor Cross. Then Jack De Baron strolled out towards the Close.

It was a little after one when he found himself at the cathedral-door, and thinking that the Dean and his daughter might be at lunch, he went into the building, so that he might get rid of half an hour. He had not often been in cathedrals of late years, and now looked about him with something of awe. He could remember that when he was a child he had been brought here to church, and as he stood in the choir with the obsequient vergers at his elbow, he recollected how he had got through the minutes of a long sermon—a sermon that had seemed to be very long—in planning the way in which, if left to himself, he would climb to the pinnacle which culminated over the bishop's seat, and thence make his way along the capitals and vantages of stonework, till he would ascend into the triforium and thus become lord and master of the old building. How much smaller his ambitions had become since then, and how much less manly. "Yes, sir; his lordship is here every Sunday when he is at the palace," said the vergers. "But his lordship is ailing now."

"And the Dean?"

"The Dean always comes once a day to service when he is here; but the Dean has been much away of late. Since Miss Mary's marriage the Dean isn't in Brotherton as much as formerly."

"I know the Dean. I'm going to his house just now. They like him in Brotherton, I suppose?"

"That's according to their way of thinking, sir. We like him. I suppose you heard, sir, there was something of a row between him and Miss Mary's

brother-in-law!" Jack said that he had heard of it. "There's them as say he was wrong."

"I say he was quite right."

"That's what we think, sir. It's got about that his lordship said some bad word of Miss Mary. A father wasn't to stand that because he's a clergyman, was he, sir?"

"The Dean did just what you or I would do."

"That's just it, sir. That's what we all say. Thank you, sir. You won't see Prince Edward's monument, sir? Gentlemen always do go down to the crypt." Jack wouldn't see the monument to-day, and having paid his half-crown, was left to wander about alone through the aisles.

How would it have been with him if his life had been different; if he had become, perhaps, a clergyman and had married Mary Lovelace?—or if he had become anything but what he was with her for his wife? He knew that his life had been a failure, that the best of it was gone, and that even the best of it had been unsatisfactory. Many people liked him, but was there anyone who loved him? In all the world there was but one person that he loved, and she was the wife of another man. Of one thing at this moment he was quite sure—that he would never wound her ears by speaking of his love. Would it not be better that he should go away and see her no more? The very tone in which the verger had spoken of Miss Mary had thrown to the winds those doubts which had come from the teaching of Adelaide Houghton and Guss Mildmay. If she had been as they said, would even her father have felt for her

as he did feel, and been carried away by his indignation at the sound of an evil word?

But he had asked after the Dean at the hotel, and had told the verger of his acquaintance, and had been seen by many in the town. He could not now leave the place without calling. So resolving he knocked at last at the Deanery-door, and was told that the Dean was at home. He asked for the Dean, and not for Lady George, and was shown into the library. In a minute the Dean was with him. "Come in and have some lunch," said the Dean. "We have this moment sat down. Mary will be delighted to see you—and so am I." Of course he went in to lunch, and in a moment was shaking hands with Mary, who in truth was delighted to see him.

"You've come from Rudham?" asked the Dean.

"This moment."

"Have they heard the news there?"

"What news?"

"Lord Brotherton is there, is he not?"

"I think he left to-day. He was to do so. I heard no news." He looked across to Mary, and saw that her face was sad and solemn.

"The child that they called Lord Popenjoy is dead," said the Dean. He was neither sad nor solemn. He could not control the triumph of his voice as he told the news.

"Poor little boy!" said Mary.

"Dead!" exclaimed Jack.

"I've just had a telegram from my lawyer in London. Yes; he's out of the way. Poor little fel-

low! As sure as I sit here he was not Lord Popenjoy."

"I never understood anything about it," said Jack.

"But I did. Of course the matter is at rest now. I'm not the man to grudge anyone what belongs to him; but I do not choose that anyone belonging to me should be swindled. If she were to have a son now, he would be the heir."

"Oh papa, do not talk in that way."

"Rights are rights, and the truth is the truth. Can anyone wish that such a property and such a title should go to the child of an Italian woman whom no one has seen or known?"

"Let it take its chance now, papa."

"Of course it must take its chance; but your chances must be protected."

"Papa, he was at any rate my nephew."

"I don't know that. In law I believe he was no such thing. But he has gone, and we need think of him no further." He was very triumphant. There was an air about him as though he had already won the great stake for which he had been playing. But in the midst of it all he was very civil to Jack De Baron. "You will stay and dine with us to-day, Captain De Baron?"

"Oh do," said Mary.

"We can give you a bed if you will sleep here."

"Thanks. My things are at the hotel, and I will not move them. I will come and dine if you'll have me."

"We shall be delighted. We can't make company of you, because no one is coming. I shouldn't wonder if Lord George rode over. He will if he hears of this. Of course he'll know to-morrow; but perhaps they will not have telegraphed to him. I should go out to Manor Cross, only I don't quite like to put my foot in that man's house." Jack could not but feel that the Dean treated him almost as though he were one of the family. "I rather think I shall ride out and risk it. You won't mind my leaving you?" Of course Jack declared that he would not for worlds be in the way. "Mary will play Badminton with you, if you like it. Perhaps you can get hold of Miss Pountner and Grey, and make up a game." Mr. Grey was one of the minor canons, and Miss Pountner was the canon's daughter.

"We shall do very well, papa. I'm not mad after Badminton, and I daresay we shall manage without Miss Pountner."

The Dean went off, and in spite of the feud did ride over to Manor Cross. His mind was so full of the child's death and of the all but certainty of coming glory which now awaited his daughter, that he could not keep himself quiet. It seemed to him that a just Providence had interfered to take that child away. And as the Marquis hated him, so did he hate the Marquis. He had been willing at first to fight the battle fairly without personal animosity. On the Marquis's first arrival he had offered him the right hand of fellowship. He remembered it all accurately—how the Marquis had on that occasion ill-

used and insulted him. No man knew better than the Dean when he was well-treated and when ill-treated. And then this lord had sent for him for the very purpose of injuring and wounding him through his daughter's name. His wrath on that occasion had not all expended itself in the blow. After that word had been spoken he was the man's enemy for ever. There could be no forgiveness. He could not find room in his heart for even a spark of pity because the man had lost an only child. Had not the man tried to do worse than kill his only child—his daughter? Now the pseudo-Popenjoy was dead, and the Dean was in a turmoil of triumph. It was essential to him that he should see his son-in-law. His son-in-law must be made to understand what it would be to be the father of the future Marquis of Brotherton.

"I think I'll just step across to the inn," said Jack, when the Dean had left them.

"And we'll have a game of croquet when you come back. I do like croquet, though papa laughs at me. I think I like all games. It is so nice to be doing something."

Jack sauntered back to the inn, chiefly that he might have a further opportunity of considering what he would say to her. And he did make up his mind. He would play croquet with all his might, and behave to her as though she were his dearest sister.

CHAPTER XIII.

How could he help it?

WHEN he returned she was out in the garden with her hat on and a mallet in her hand; but she was seated on one of a cluster of garden-chairs under a great cedar-tree. "I think it's almost too hot to play," she said. It was an August afternoon, and the sun was very bright in the heavens. Jack was of course quite willing to sit under the cedar-tree instead of playing croquet. He was prepared to do whatever she wished. If he could only know what subjects she would prefer, he would talk about them and nothing else. "How do you think papa is looking?" she asked.

"He always looks well."

"Ah; he was made dreadfully unhappy by that affair up in London. He never would talk about it to me; but he was quite ill while he thought the Marquis was in danger."

"I don't believe the Marquis was much the worse for it."

"They said he was, and papa for some time could not get over it. Now he is elated. I wish he would not be so glad because that poor little boy has died."

"It makes a great difference to him, Lady George;—and to you."

"Of course it makes a difference, and of course I feel it. I am as anxious for my husband as any other woman. If it should come fairly, as it were by God's doing, I am not going to turn up my nose at it."

"Is not this fairly?"

"Oh yes. Papa did not make the little boy die, of course. But I don't think that people should long for things like this. If they can't keep from wishing them, they should keep their wishes to themselves. It is so like coveting other people's goods. Don't you think we ought to keep the commandments, Captain De Baron?"

"Certainly—if we can."

"Then we oughtn't to long for other people's titles."

"If I understand it, the Dean wanted to prevent somebody else from getting a title which wasn't his own. That wouldn't be breaking the commandment."

"Of course I'm not finding fault with papa. He would not for worlds try to take anything that wasn't his—or mine. But it's so sad about the little boy."

"I don't think the Marquis cared for him."

"Oh, he must have cared! His only child! And the poor mother;—think how she must feel."

"In spite of it all, I do think it's a very good thing that he's dead," said Jack, laughing.

"Then you ought to keep it to yourself, sir. It's a very horrid thing to say so. Wouldn't you like to smoke a cigar? You may, you know. Papa always

smokes out here, because he says Mr. Groschut can't see him."

"Mr. Groschut is at Rudham," said Jack, as he took a cigar out of his case and lit it.

"At Rudham? What promotion?"

"He didn't seem to me to be a first-class sort of a fellow."

"Quite a last-class sort of fellow, if there is a last class. I'll tell you a secret, Captain De Baron: Mr. Groschut is my pet abomination. If I hate anybody, I hate him. I think I do really hate Mr. Groschut. I almost wish that they would make him bishop of some unhealthy place."

"So that he might go away and die?"

"If the musquitoes would eat him day and night, that would be enough. Who else was there at Rudham?"

"Mrs. Montacute Jones."

"Dear Mrs. Jones. I do like Mrs. Jones."

"And Adelaide Houghton with her husband." Mary turned up her nose and made a grimace as the Houghtons were named. "You used to be very fond of Adelaide."

"Very fond is a long word. We were by way of being friends; but we are friends no longer."

"Tell me what she did to offend you, Lady George? I know there was something."

"You are her cousin. Of course I am not going to abuse her to you."

"She's not half so much my cousin as you are my friend—if I may say so. What did she do or what did she say?"

"She painted her face."

"If you're going to quarrel, Lady George, with every woman in London who does that, you'll have a great many enemies."

"And the hair at the back of her head got bigger and bigger every month. Papa always quotes something about Dr. Fell when he's asked why he does not like anybody. She's Dr. Fell to me."

"I don't think she quite knows why you've cut her"

"I'm quite sure she does, Captain De Baron. She knows all about it. And now, if you please, we won't talk of her any more. Who else was there at Rudham?"

"All the old set. Aunt Ju and Guss."

"Then you were happy."

"Quite so. I believe that no one knows all about that better than you do."

"You ought to have been happy."

"Lady George, I thought you always told the truth."

"I try to; and I think you ought to have been happy. You don't mean to tell me that Miss Mildmay is nothing to you?"

"She is a very old friend."

"Ought she not to be more? Though of course I have no right to ask."

"You have a right if anyone has. I haven't a friend in the world I would trust as I would you. No; she ought not to be more."

"Have you never given her a right to think that she would be more?"

He paused a moment or two before he answered. Much as he wished to trust her, anxious as he was that she should be his real friend, he could hardly bring himself to tell her all that had taken place at Rudham Park during the last day or two. Up to that time he never had given Miss Mildmay any right. So, at least, he still assured himself. But now—it certainly was different now. He desired of all things to be perfectly honest with Lady George—to be even innocent in all that he said to her; but—just for this once—he was obliged to deviate into a lie. “Never!” he said.

“Of course it is not for me to inquire further.”

“It is very hard to describe the way in which such an intimacy has come about. Guss Milcmay and I have been very much thrown together; but, even had she wished it, we never could have married. We have no means.”

“And yet you live like rich people.”

“We have no means because we have lived like rich people.”

“You have never asked her to marry you?”

“Never.”

“Nor made her think that you would ask her? That comes to the same thing, Captain De Baron.”

“How am I to answer that? How am I to tell it all without seeming to boast. When it first came to pass that we knew ourselves well enough to admit of such a thing being said between us, I told her that marriage was impossible. Is not that enough?”

“I suppose so,” said Lady George, who remem-

bered well every word that Guss Mildmay had said to herself. "I don't know why I should inquire about it, only I thought——"

"I know what you thought."

"What did I think?"

"That I was a heartless scoundrel."

"No, never. If I had, I should not have—have cared about it. Perhaps it has been unfortunate."

"Most unfortunate!" Then again there was a pause, during which he went on smoking while she played with her mallet. "I wish I could tell you everything about it; only I can't. Did she ever speak to you?"

"Yes, once."

"And what did she say?"

"I cannot tell you that either."

"I have endeavoured to be honest; but sometimes it is so difficult. One wants sometimes to tell the whole truth, but it won't come out. I am engaged to her now."

"You are engaged to her!"

"And two days hence I was free as ever."

"Then I may congratulate you."

"No, no. It makes me miserable. I do not love her. There is one other person that I care for, and I never can care for anyone else. There is one woman that I love, and I never really loved anyone else."

"That is very sad, Captain De Baron."

"Is it not? I can never marry Miss Mildmay."

"And yet you have promised?"

"I have promised under certain circumstances which can never, never come about."

"Why did you promise if you do not love her?"

"Cannot you understand without my telling you? I cannot tell you that. I am sure you understand."

"I suppose I do. Poor Miss Mildmay!"

"And poor Jack De Baron!"

"Yes; poor Jack De Baron also! No man should talk to a girl of marrying her unless he loves her. It is different with a girl. She may come to love a man. She may love a man better than all the world, though she hardly knew him when she married him. If he is good to her, she will certainly do so. But if a man marries a woman without loving her, he will soon hate her."

"I shall never marry Miss Mildmay."

"And yet you have said you would?"

"I told you that I wanted to tell you everything. It is so pleasant to have someone to trust, even though I should be blamed as you are blaming me. It simply means that I can marry no one else."

"But you love someone?" She felt, when she was asking the question, that it was indiscreet. When the assertion was made she had not told herself that she was the woman. She had not thought it. For an instant she had tried to imagine who that other one could be. But yet, when the words were out of her mouth, she knew that they were indiscreet. Was she not indiscreet in holding

any such conversation with a man who was not her brother or even her cousin! She wished that he were her cousin, so that she might become the legitimate depositary of his secrets. Though she was scolding him for his misdoings, yet she hardly liked him the less for them. She thought that she did understand how it was, and she thought that the girl was more in fault than the man. It was not till the words had passed her mouth and the question had been asked that she felt the indiscretion. "But you love someone else?"

"Certainly I do; but I had not meant to speak about that."

"I will inquire into no secrets."

"Is that a secret? Can it be a secret? Do you not know that ever since I knew you I have had no pleasure but in being with you, and talking to you, and looking at you?"

"Captain De Baron!" As she spoke she rose from her seat as though she would at once leave him and go back into the house.

"You must hear me now. You must not go without hearing me. I will not say a word to offend you."

"You have offended me."

"How could I help it? What was I to do? What ought I to have said? Pray do not go, Lady George."

"I did not think you would have insulted me. I did trust you."

"You may trust me. On my honour as a gentleman, I will never say another word that you can

take amiss. I wish I could tell you all my feelings. One cannot help one's love."

"A man may govern his words."

"As I trust in heaven, I had determined that I would never say a syllable to you that I might not have spoken to my sister. Have I asked you to love me? I have not thought it possible that you should do so. I know you to be too good. It has never come within my dreams."

"It is wicked to think of it."

"I have not thought of it. I will never think of it. You are like an angel to me. If I could write poetry, I should write about you. If ever I build castles in the air and think what I might have been if things had gone well with me, I try to fancy then that I might have had you for a wife. That is not wicked. That is not a crime. Can you be angry with me because, having got to know you as I do, I think you better, nicer, jollier, more beautiful than anyone else? Have you never really loved a friend?"

"I love my husband with all my heart — oh, better than all the world."

Jack did not quite understand this. His angel was an angel. He was sure of that. And he wished her to be still an angel. But he could not understand how any angel could passionately love Lord George Germain—especially this angel who had been so cruelly treated by him. Had she loved him better than all the world when he walked her out of Mrs. Jones's drawing-room, reprimanding her before all the guests for her conduct in dancing

the Kappa-kappa? But this was a matter not open to argument. "I may still be your friend?" he said.

"I think you had better not come again."

"Do not say that, Lady George. If I have done wrong, forgive me. I think you must admit that I could hardly help myself."

"Not help yourself!"

"Did I not tell you that I wanted you to know the whole truth? How could I make you understand about Miss Mildmay without telling it all? Say that you will forgive me."

"Say that it is not so, and then I will forgive you."

"No. It is so, and it must be so. It will remain so always, but yet you will surely forgive me, if I never speak of it again. You will forgive me and understand me, and when hereafter you see me as a middle-aged man about town, you will partly know why it is so. Oh dear; I forgot to tell you. We had another old friend of yours at Rudham—a very particular friend." Of course she had forgiven him, and now she was thankful to him for his sudden breach of the subject; but she was not herself strong enough immediately to turn to another matter. "Who do you think was there?"

"How can I tell?"

"The Baroness."

"No?"

"As large as life."

"Baroness Banman at Mr. De Baron's!"

"Yes; — Baroness Banmann. Aunt Julia had contrived to get permission to bring her, and the joke was that she did us all out of our money. She got a five-pound note from me."

"What a goose you were."

"And ten from Lord Brotherton! I think that was the greatest triumph. She was down on him without the slightest compunction. I never saw a man so shot in my life. He sent me to look for the money, and she never left me till I had got it for her."

"I thought Aunt Ju had had enough of her."

"I should think she has now. And we had Lord Giblest. Lord Giblest is to marry Miss Patmore Green after all."

"Poor Lord Giblest!"

"And poor Miss Patmore Green. I don't know which will have the worst of it. They can practise the Kappa-kappa together for consolation. It is all Mrs. Jones's doing, and she is determined that he shan't escape. I'm to go down to Killancodlem and help."

"Why should you have anything to do with it?"

"Very good shooting, and plenty to eat and drink—and Giblest is a friend of mine; so I'm bound to lend a hand. And now, Lady George, I think I'll go to the hotel and be back to dinner. We are friends?"

"Yes; if you promise not to offend me."

"I will never offend you. I will never say a word that all the world might not hear—except this once—to thank you." Then he seized her hand

and kissed it. "You shall always be a sister to me," he said. "When I am in trouble I will come to you. Say that you will love me as a brother."

"I will always regard you as a friend."

"Regard is a cold word, but I will make the most of it. Here is your father."

At this moment they were coming from a side-path on to the lawn, and as they did so the Dean appeared upon the terrace through the Deanery-room window. With the Dean was Lord George, and Mary, as soon as she saw him, rushed up to him and threw her arms round his neck. "Oh, George—dear, dearest George—papa said that perhaps you would come. You are going to stay?"

"He will dine here," said the Dean.

"Only dine!"

"I cannot stay longer to-day," said Lord George, with his eye upon Captain De Baron. The Dean had told him that De Baron was there; but still when he saw that the man had been walking with his wife, a renewed uneasiness came upon him. It could not be right that the man from whose arms he had rescued her on the night of the ball should be left alone with her a whole afternoon in the Deanery garden! She was thoughtless as a child; but it seemed to him that the Dean was as thoughtless as his daughter. The Dean must know what people had said. The Dean had himself seen that horrid dance, with its results. The awful accusation made by the Marquis had been uttered in the Dean's ears. Because that had been wicked and devilishly false, the Dean's folly was not the less.

Lord George embraced his wife, but she knew from the touch of his arm round her waist that there was something wrong with him.

The two men shook hands of course, and then De Baron went out, muttering something to the Dean as to his being back to dinner. "I can't say I like that young man," said Lord George.

"I like him very much," replied the Dean. "He is always good-humoured, and I think he's honest. I own to a predilection for happy people."

Mary was of course soon upstairs with her husband. "I thought you would come," she said, hanging on him.

"I did not like not to see you after the news. It is important. You must feel that."

"Poor little boy! Don't you grieve for them?"

"Yes, I do. Brotherton has treated me very badly, but I do feel for him. I shall write to him and say so. But that will not alter the fact. Popenjoy is dead."

"No; it will not alter the fact." He was so solemn with her that she hardly knew how to talk to him.

"Popenjoy is dead—if he was Popenjoy. I suppose he was; but that does not signify now."

"Not in the least, I suppose."

"And if you have a son——"

"Oh, George?"

"He won't be Popenjoy yet."

"Or perhaps ever."

"Or perhaps ever; but a time will probably come

when he will be Popenjoy. We can't help thinking about it, you know."

"Of course not."

"I'm sure I don't want my brother to die."

"I am sure I don't."

"But the family has to be kept up. I do care about the family. They all think at Manor Cross that you should go over at once."

"Are you going to stay there, George? Of course I will go if you are going to stay there."

"They think you should come, though it were only for a few days."

"And then? Of course I will go, George, if you say so. I have had my visit with papa—as much as I had a right to expect. And, oh George, I do so long to be with you again." Then she hung upon him and kissed him. It must have been impossible that he should be really jealous, though Captain De Baron had been there the whole day. Nor was he jealous, except with that Cæsarian jealousy lest she should be unfortunate enough to cause a whisper derogatory to his marital dignity.

The matter had been fully discussed at Manor Cross; and the Manor Cross conclave, meaning of course Lady Sarah, had thought that Mary should be brought to the house, if only for a day or two, if only that people in Brothershire might know that there had been no quarrel between her and her husband. That she should have visited her father might be considered as natural. It need not be accounted as quite unnatural that she should have done so without her husband. But now—now it

was imperative that Brothershire should know that the mother of the future Lord Popenjoy was on good terms with the family. "Of course her position is very much altered," Lady Susanna had said in private to Lady Amelia. The old Marchioness felt a real longing to see "dear Mary," and to ask becoming questions as to her condition. And it was quite understood that she was not to be required to make any cloaks or petticoats. The garments respecting which she must be solicitous for the next six months would, as the Marchioness felt, be of a very august nature. Oh that the future baby might be born at Manor Cross. The Marchioness did not see why Lord George should leave the house at all. Brotherton couldn't know anything about it in Italy, and if George must go, Mary might surely be left there for the event. The Marchioness declared that she could die happy if she might see another Popenjoy born in the purple of Manor Cross.

"When am I to go?" asked Mary. She was sitting now close to him, and the question was asked with full delight.

"I do not know whether you can be ready to-morrow."

"Of course I can be ready to-morrow. Oh, George, to be back with you! Even for ten days it seems to be a great happiness. But if you go, then of course you will take me with you." There was a reality about this which conquered him, even in spite of Captain De Baron, so that he came down to dinner in good-humour with the world.

CHAPTER XIV.

Sir Henry said it was the only thing.

THE dinner at the Deanery went off without much excitement. Captain De Baron would of course have preferred that Lord George should have remained at Manor Cross, but under no circumstances could he have had much more to say to the lady. They understood each other now. He was quite certain that any evil thing spoken of her had been sheer slander, and yet he had managed to tell her everything of himself without subjecting himself to her undying anger. When she left the drawing-room, the conversation turned again upon the great Popenjoy question, and from certain words which fell from the Dean, Jack was enabled to surmise that Lord George had reason to hope that an heir might be born to him. "He does not look as though he would live long himself," said the Dean, speaking of the Marquis.

"I trust he may with all my heart," said Lord George.

"That's another question," replied the Dean. "I only say that he doesn't look like it." Lord George went away early, and Jack De Baron thought it prudent to retire at the same time. "So you're going to-morrow, dear," said the Dean.

"Yes, papa. Is it not best?"

"Oh yes. Nothing could be worse than a prolonged separation. He means to be honest and good."

"He is honest and good, papa."

"You have had your triumph."

"I did not want to triumph;—not at least over him."

"After what had occurred it was necessary that you should have your own way in coming here. Otherwise he would have triumphed. He would have taken you away, and you and I would have been separated. Of course you are bound to obey him;—but there must be limits. He would have taken you away as though in disgrace, and that I could not stand. There will be an end of that now. God knows when I shall see you again, Mary."

"Why not, papa?"

"Because he hasn't got over his feeling against me. I don't think he ever gets over any feeling. Having no home of his own, why does he not bring you here?"

"I don't think he likes the idea of being a burden to you."

"Exactly. He has not cordiality enough to feel that when two men are in a boat together, as he and I are because of you, all that feeling should go to the wind. He ought not to be more ashamed to sit at my table and drink of my cup than you are. If it were all well between us and he had the

property, should I scruple to go and stay at Manor Cross?"

"You would still have your own house to go back to."

"So will he — after awhile. But it can't be altered, dear, and God forbid that I should set you against him. He is not a rake nor a spend-thrift, nor will he run after other women." Mary thought of Mrs. Houghton, but she held her tongue. "He is not a bad man, and I think he loves you."

"I am sure he does."

"But I can't help feeling sad at parting with you. I suppose I shall at any rate be able to see you up in town next season." The Dean, as he said this, was almost weeping.

Mary, when she was alone in her room, of course thought much of Captain De Baron and his story. It was a pity—a thousand pities—that it should be so. It was to be regretted—much regretted—that he had been induced to tell his story. She was angry with herself because she had been indiscreet, and she was still angry—a little angry with him—because he had yielded to the temptation. But there had been something sweet in it. She was sorry, grieved in her heart of hearts that he should love her. She had never striven to gain his love. She had never even thought of it. It ought not to have been so. She should have thought of it; she should not have shown herself to be so pleased with his society. But yet—yet it was sweet. Then there came upon her some memory of her old dreams,

before she had been engaged to Lord George. She knew how vain had been those dreams, because she now loved Lord George with her whole heart; but yet she remembered them, and felt as though they had come true with a dreamy half truth. And she brought to mind all those flattering words with which he had spoken her praises—how he had told her that she was an angel, too good and pure to be supposed capable of evil; how he had said that in his castles in the air he would still think of her as his wife. Surely a man may build what castles in the air he pleases, if he will only hold his tongue! She was quite sure that she did not love him, but she was sure also that his was the proper way of making love. And then she thought of Guss Mildmay. Could she not in pure charity do a good turn to that poor girl? Might she not tell Captain De Baron that it was his duty to marry her? And if he felt it to be his duty, would he not do so? It may be doubted whether in these moments she did not think much better of Captain De Baron than that gentleman deserved.

On the next day the Manor Cross carriage came over for her. The Dean had offered to send her, but Lord George had explained that his mother was anxious that the carriage should come. There would be a cart for the luggage. As to Lady George herself, there was a general feeling at Manor Cross that in the present circumstances the family carriage should bring her home. But it came empty. "God bless you, dearest," said the Dean as he put her into the vehicle.

"Good-bye, papa. I suppose you can come over and see me?"

"I don't know that I can. I saw none of the ladies when I was there yesterday."

"I don't care a bit for the ladies. Where I go, papa, you can come. Of course George will see you, and you could ask for me." The Dean smiled, and kissed her again, and then she was gone.

She hardly knew what grand things were in store for her. She was still rebelling in her heart against skirts and petticoats, and resolving that she would not go to church twice on Sundays unless she liked it, when the carriage drove up to the door. They were all in the hall, all except the Marchioness. "We wouldn't go in," said Lady Amelia, "because we didn't like to fill the carriage."

"And George wanted us to send it early," said Lady Sarah, "before we had done our work." They all kissed her affectionately, and then she was again in her husband's arms. Mrs. Toff curtsied to her most respectfully. Mary observed the curtsy and reminded herself at the moment that Mrs. Toff had never curtsied to her before. Even the tall footman in knee-breeches stood back with a demeanour which had hitherto been vouchsafed only to the real ladies of the family. Who could tell how soon that wicked Marquis would die; and then—then how great would not be the glory of the Dean's daughter! "Perhaps you won't mind coming up to mamma as soon as you have got your hat off," said Lady Susanna. "Mamma is so anxious to see you." Mary's hat was immediately off, and she declared herself

ready to go to the Marchioness. "Mamma has had a great deal to trouble her since you were here," said Lady Susanna, as she led the way upstairs. "She has aged very much. You'll be kind to her, I know."

"Of course I'll be kind," said Mary; "I hope I never was unkind."

"She thinks so much of things now, and then she cries so often. We do all we can to prevent her from crying, because it does make her so weak. Beef-tea is best, we think; and then we try to get her to sleep a good deal.—Mary has come, mamma. Here she is. The carriage has only just arrived." Mary followed Lady Susanna into the room, and the Marchioness was immediately immersed in a flood of tears.

"My darling!" she exclaimed; "my dearest, if anything can ever make me happy again, it is that you should have come back to me." Mary kissed her mother-in-law and submitted to be kissed with a pretty grace, as though she and the old lady had always been the warmest, most affectionate friends. "Sit down, my love. I have had the easy-chair brought there on purpose for you. Susanna, get her that footstool." Susanna, without moving a muscle of her face, brought the footstool. "Now sit down, and let me look at you. I don't think she's much changed." This was very distressing to poor Mary, who, with all her desire to oblige the Marchioness, could not bring herself to sit down in the easy-chair. "So that poor little boy has gone, my dear?"

"I was so sorry to hear it."

"Yes, of course. That was quite proper. When anybody dies we ought to be sorry for them. I'm sure I did all I could to make things comfortable for him. Didn't I, Susanna?"

"You were quite anxious about him, mamma."

"So I was—quite anxious. I have no doubt his mother neglected him. I always thought that. But now there will be another, won't there?" This was a question which the mother expectant could not answer, and in order to get over the difficulty Susanna suggested that Mary should be allowed to go down to lunch.

"Certainly, my dear. In her condition she ought not to be kept waiting a minute. And mind, Susanna, she has bottled porter. I spoke about it before. She should have a pint at lunch and a pint at dinner."

"I can't drink porter," said Mary, in despair.

"My dear, you ought to; you ought indeed; you must. I remember as well as if it were yesterday Sir Henry telling me it was the only sure thing. That was before Popenjoy was born—I mean Brotherton. I do so hope it will be a Popenjoy, my dear." This was the last word said to her as Mary was escaping from the room.

She was not expected to make cloaks and skirts, but she was obliged to fight against a worse servitude even than that. She almost longed for the cloaks and skirts when day after day she was entreated to take her place in the easy-chair by the couch of the Marchioness. There was a cruelty in

refusing, but in yielding there was a crushing misery. The Marchioness evidently thought that the future stability of the family depended on Mary's quiescence and capability for drinking beer. Very many lies were necessarily told by all the family. She was made to believe that Mary never got up before eleven; and the doctor who came to see herself, and to whose special care Mary was of course recommended, was induced to say that it was essential that Lady George should be in the open air three hours every day. "You know I'm not in the least ill, mother," Mary said to her one day. Since these new hopes and the necessity for such hopes had come up, the Marchioness had requested that she might be called mother by her daughter-in-law.

"No, my dear, not ill; but I remember as though it were yesterday what Sir Henry said to me when Popenjoy was going to be born. Of course he was Popenjoy when he was born. I don't think they've any physicians like Sir Henry now. I do hope it'll be a Popenjoy."

"But that can't be, mother. You are forgetting."

The old woman thought for awhile, and then remembered the difficulty. "No, not quite at once." Then her mind wandered again. "But if this isn't a Popenjoy, my dear—and it's all in the hands of God—then the next may be. My three first were all girls; and it was a great trouble; but Sir Henry said the next would be a Popenjoy; and so it was. I hope this will be a Popenjoy, because I might die before the next." When a week of all this had

been endured, Mary in her heart was glad that the sentence of expulsion from Manor Cross still stood against her husband, feeling that six months of reiterated longings for a Popenjoy would kill her and the possible Popenjoy also.

Then came the terrible question of an immediate residence. The month was nearly over, and Lord George had determined that he would go up to town for a few days when the time came. Mary begged to be taken with him, but to this he would not accede, alleging that his sojourn there would only be temporary, till something should be settled. "I am sure," said Mary, "your brother would dislike my being here worse than you." That might be true, but the edict, as it had been pronounced, had not been against her. The Marquis had simply ordered that, in the event of Lord George remaining in the house, the house and park should be advertised for letting. "George, I think he must be mad," said Mary.

"He is sane enough to have the control of his own property."

"If it is let, why shouldn't you take it?"

"Where on earth should I get the money?"

"Couldn't we all do it among us?"

"He wouldn't let it to us; he will allow my mother and sisters to live here for nothing; and I don't think he has said anything to Mr. Knox about you. But I am to be banished."

"He must be mad."

"Mad or not, I must go."

"Do—do let me go with you! Do go to the

Deanery. Papa will make it all square by coming up to us in London."

"Your father has a right to be in the house in London," said Lord George with a scowl.

When the month was over he did go up to town, and saw Mr. Knox. Mr. Knox advised him to go back to Manor Cross, declaring that he himself would take no further steps without further orders. He had not had a line from the Marquis. He did not even know where the Marquis was, supposing, however, that he was in his house on the lake; but he did know that the Marchioness was not with him, as separate application had been made to him by her ladyship for money. "I don't think I can do it," said Lord George. Mr. Knox shrugged his shoulders, and again said that he saw no objection. "I should be very slow in advertising, you know," said Mr. Knox.

"But I don't think that I have a right to be in a man's house without his leave. I don't think I am justified in staying there against his will because he is my brother." Mr. Knox could only shrug his shoulders.

He remained up in town doing nothing, doubtful as to where he should go and whither he should take his wife, while she was still at Manor Cross, absolutely in the purple, but still not satisfied with her position. She was somewhat cheered at this time by a high-spirited letter from her friend Mrs. Jones, written from Killancodlem.

"We are all here," said Mrs. Jones, "and we do

so wish you were with us. I have heard of your condition at last, and of course it would not be fit that you should be amusing yourself with wicked idle people like us, while all the future of all the Germain is, so to say, in your keeping. How very opportune that that poor boy should have gone just as the other is coming! Mind that you are a good girl and take care of yourselves. I daresay all the Germain ladies are looking after you day and night, so that you can't misbehave very much. No more Kappa-kappas for many a long day for you!

"We have got Lord Giblest here. It was such a task! I thought cart-ropes wouldn't have brought him? Now he is as happy as the day is long, and like a tame cat in my hands. I really think he is very much in love with her, and she behaves quite prettily. I took care that Green *père* should come down in the middle of it, and that clenched it. The lover didn't make the least fight when papa appeared, but submitted himself like a sheep to the shearers. I shouldn't have done it if I hadn't known that he wanted a wife, and if I hadn't been sure that she would make a good one. There are some men who never really get on their legs till they're married, and never would get married without a little help. I'm sure he'll bless me, or would do, only he'll think after a bit that he did it all by himself.

"Our friend Jack is with us, behaving very well, but not quite like himself. There are two or three very pretty girls here, but he goes about among them quite like a steady old man. I got him to tell me that he'd seen you at Brotherton, and then he

talked a deal of nonsense about the good you'd do when you were Marchioness. I don't see, my dear, why you should do more good than other people. I hope you'll be gracious to your old friends, and keep a good house, and give nice parties. Try and make other people happy: that's the goodness I believe in. I asked him why you were to be particularly good, and then he talked a deal more nonsense, which I need not repeat.

"I hear very queer accounts about the Marquis. He behaved himself at Rudham almost like anybody else, and walked into dinner like a Christian. They say that he is all alone in Italy, and that he won't see her. I fancy he was more hurt in that little affair than some people will allow. Whatever it was, it served him right. Of course I should be glad to see Lord George come to the throne. I always tell the truth, my dear, about these things. What is the use of lying? I shall be very glad to see Lord George a marquis, and then your Popenjoy will be Popenjoy.

"You remember the Baroness—your Baroness. Oh, the Baroness! She absolutely asked me to let her come to Killancodlem. 'But I hate disabilities and rights,' said I. She gave me to understand that that made no difference. Then I was obliged to tell her that I hadn't a bed left. Any little room would do for her. 'We haven't any little rooms at Killancodlem,' said I; and then I left her.

"Good-bye. Mind you are good and take care of yourself; and whatever you do, let Popenjoy have a royal godfather."

Then her father came over to see her. At this time Lord George was up in town, and when her father was announced she felt there was no one to help her. If none of the ladies of the family would see her father she never would be gracious to them again. This was the turning-point. She could forgive them for the old quarrel. She could understand that they might have found themselves bound to take their elder brother's part at first. Then they had quarrelled with her too. Now they had received her back into their favour. But she would have none of their favours, unless they would take her father with her.

She was sitting at the time in that odious arm-chair in the old lady's room; and when Mrs. Toff brought in word that the Dean was in the little drawing-room, Lady Susanna was also present. Mary jumped up immediately, and knew that she was blushing. "Oh, I must go down to papa," she said. And away she went.

The Dean was in one of his best humours, and was full of Brotherton news. Mr. Groschut had been appointed to the vicarage of Pugsty, and would leave Brotherton within a month.

"I suppose it's a good living."

"About three hundred a year, I believe. He's been acting not quite on the square with a young lady, and the Bishop made him take it. It was that or nothing." The Dean was quite delighted; and when Mary told him something of her troubles—how impossible she found it to drink bottled porter

—he laughed, and bade her be of good cheer, and told her that there were good days coming. They had been there for nearly an hour together, and Mary was becoming unhappy. If her father were allowed to go without some recognition from the family, she would never again be friends with those women. She was beginning to think that she never would be friends again with any of them, when the door opened, and Lady Sarah entered the room.

The greeting was very civil on both sides. Lady Sarah could, if she pleased, be gracious, though she was always a little grand; and the Dean was quite willing to be pleased, if only any effort was made to please him. Lady Sarah hoped that he would stay and dine. He would perhaps excuse the Marchioness, as she rarely now left her room. The Dean could not dine at Manor Cross on that day, and then Lady Sarah asked him to come on the Thursday following.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Knox hears again from the Marquis.

"Do come, papa," said Mary, jumping up and putting her arm round her father's shoulders. She was more than willing to meet them all half-way. She would sit in the arm-chair all the morning and try to drink porter at lunch if they would receive her father graciously. Of course she was bound to her husband. She did not wish not to be bound to him. She was quite sure that she loved her husband with a perfect love. But her marriage happiness could not be complete unless her father was to make a part of the intimate home circle of her life. She was now so animated in her request to him, that her manner told all her little story—not only to him, but to Lady Sarah also.

"I will say do come also," said Lady Sarah, smiling.

Mary looked up at her and saw her smile. "If he were your papa," she said, "you would be as anxious as I am." But she also smiled as she spoke.

"Even though he is not, I am anxious."

"Who could refuse when so entreated? Of course I shall be delighted to come," said the Dean. And so it was settled. Her father was to be again made

welcome at Manor Cross, and Mary thought that she could now be happy.

"It was very good of you," she whispered to Lady Sarah, as soon as he had left them. "Of course I understand. I was very, very sorry that he and Lord Brotherton had quarrelled. I won't say anything now about anybody being wrong or anybody being right. But it would be dreadful to me if papa couldn't come to see me. I don't think you know what he is."

"I do know that you love him very dearly."

"Of course I do. There is nothing on earth he wouldn't do for me. He is always trying to make me happy. And he'd do just as much for George, if George would let him. You've been very good about it, and I love you for it." Lady Sarah was quite open to the charm of being loved. She did not talk much of such things, nor was it compatible with her nature to make many professions of affection. But it would be a happiness to her if this young sister-in-law, who would no doubt sooner or later be the female head of the house, could be taught to love her. So she kissed Mary, and then walked demurely away, conscious that any great display of feeling would be antagonistic to her principles.

During the hour that Mary had been closeted with her father there had been much difficulty among the ladies upstairs about the Dean. The suggestion that he should be asked to dine had of course come from Lady Sarah, and it fell like a little thunderbolt among them. In the first place, what would Brother-

ton say? Was it not an understood portion of the agreement under which they were allowed to live in the house, that the Dean should not be a guest there? Lady Susanna had even shuddered at his coming to call on his daughter, and they had all thought it to be improper when a short time since he had personally brought the news of Popenjoy's death to the house. And then there was their own resentment as to that affray at Scumberg's. They were probably inclined to agree with Lady Brabazon that Brotherton was not quite all that he should be; but still he was Brotherton, and the man who had nearly murdered him could not surely be a fit guest at Manor Cross. "I don't think we can do that, Sarah," Lady Susanna had said after a long silence. "Oh dear! that would be very dreadful!" the Marchioness had exclaimed. Lady Amelia had clasped her hands together and had trembled in every limb. But Lady Sarah, who never made any suggestion without deep thought, was always loath to abandon any that she had made. She clung to this with many arguments. Seeing how unreasonable Brotherton was, they could not feel themselves bound to obey him. As to the house, while their mother lived there it must be regarded as her house. It was out of the question that they should have their guests dictated to them by their brother. Perhaps the Dean was not all that a dean ought to be—but then, who was perfect? George had married his daughter, and it could not be right to separate the daughter from the father. Then came the final, strong, clenching argument. Mary would certainly

be disturbed in her mind if not allowed to see her father. Perfect tranquillity for Mary was regarded as the chief ingredient in the cup of prosperity which, after many troubles, was now to be re-brewed for the Germain family. If she were not allowed to see her father, the coming Popenjoy would suffer for it. "You'd better let him come, Susanna," said the Marchioness through her tears. Susanna had looked as stern as an old sibyl. "I really think it will be best," said Lady Amelia. "It ought to be done," said Lady Sarah. "I suppose you had better go to him," said the Marchioness. "I could not see him; indeed I couldn't. But he won't want to see me." Lady Susanna did not yield, but Lady Sarah, as we know, went down on her mission of peace.

Mary, as soon as she was alone, sat herself down to write a letter to her husband. It was then Monday, and her father was to dine there on Thursday. The triumph would hardly be complete unless George would come home to receive him. Her letter was full of arguments, full of entreaties, and full of love. Surely he might come for one night, if he couldn't stay any longer. It would be so much nicer for her father to have a gentleman there. Such an attention would please him so much! "I am sure he would go twice the distance if you were coming to his house," pleaded Mary.

Lord George came, and in a quiet way the dinner was a success. The Dean made himself very agreeable. The Marchioness did not appear, but her absence was attributed to the condition of her health. Lady Sarah, as the great promoter of the

festival, was bound to be on her good behaviour, and Lady Amelia endeavoured to copy her elder sister. It was not to be expected that Lady Susanna should be cordially hospitable; but it was known that Lady Susanna was habitually silent in company. Mary could forgive her second sister-in-law's sullenness, understanding, as she did quite well, that she was at this moment triumphing over Lady Susanna. Mr. Groschut was not a favourite with any of the party at Manor Cross, and the Dean made himself pleasant by describing the nature of the late chaplain's promotion. "He begged the Bishop to let him off," said the Dean, "but his lordship was peremptory. It was Pugsty or leave the diocese."

"What had he done, papa?" asked Mary.

"He had promised to marry Hawkins's daughter." Hawkins was the Brotherton bookseller on the Low Church side. "And then he denied the promise. Unfortunately he had written letters, and Hawkins took them to the Bishop. I should have thought Groschut would have been too sharp to write letters."

"But what was all that to the Bishop?" asked Lord George.

"The Bishop was, I think, just a little tired of him. The Bishop is old and meek, and Mr. Groschut thought that he could domineer. He did not quite know his man. The Bishop is old and meek, and would have borne much. When Mr. Groschut scolded him, I fancy that he said nothing. But he bided his time; and when Mr. Hawkins came, then there

was a decision pronounced. It was Pugsty, or nothing."

"Is Pugsty very nasty, papa?"

"It isn't very nice, I fancy. It just borders on the Potteries, and the population is heavy. As he must marry the bookseller's daughter also, the union, I fear, won't be very grateful."

"I don't see why a bishop should send a bad man to any parish," suggested Lady Sarah.

"What is he to do with a Groschut, when he had unfortunately got hold of one? He couldn't be turned out to starve. The Bishop would never have been rid of him. A small living—some such thing as Pugsty—was almost a necessity."

"But the people," said Lady Sarah. "What is to become of the poor people?"

"Let us hope they may like him. At any rate, he will be better at Pugsty than at Brotherton." In this way the evening passed off; and when at ten o'clock the Dean took his departure, it was felt by everyone except Lady Susanna that the proper thing had been done.

Lord George, having thus come back to Manor Cross, remained there. He was not altogether happy in his mind; but his banishment seemed to be so absurd a thing that he did not return to London. At Manor Cross there was something for him to do. In London there was nothing. And, after all, there was a question whether, as a pure matter of right, the Marquis had the power to pronounce such a sentence. Manor Cross no doubt belonged to him, but then so also did Cross Hall belong for

the time to his mother; and he was receiving the rent of Cross Hall while his mother was living at Manor Cross. Lady Sarah was quite clear that, for the present, they were justified in regarding Manor Cross as belonging to them. "And who'll tell him when he's all the way out there?" asked Mary. "I never did hear of such a thing in all my life. What harm can you do to the house, George?"

So they went on in peace and quietness for the next three months, during which not a single word was heard from the Marquis. They did not even know where he was, and under the present circumstances did not care to ask any questions of Mr. Knox. Lord George had worn out his scruples, and was able to go about his old duties in his old fashion. The Dean had dined there once or twice, and Lord George on one occasion had consented to stay with his wife for a night or two at the Deanery. Things seemed to have fallen back quietly into the old way—as they were before the Marquis with his wife and child had come to disturb them. Of course there was a great difference in Mary's position. It was not only that she was about to become a mother, but that she would do so in a very peculiar manner. Had not the Marquis taken a wife to himself, there would always have been the probability that he would some day do so. Had there not been an Italian Marchioness and a little Italian Popenjoy, the ladies at Manor Cross would still have given him credit for presenting them with a future marchioness and a future Popenjoy at some future day. Now his turn had, as it were, gone. Another Popenjoy

from that side was not to be expected. In consequence of all this Mary was very much exalted. They none of them now wished for another Popenjoy from the elder branch. All their hopes were centred in Mary. To Mary herself this importance had its drawbacks. There was the great porter question still unsettled. The armchair with the footstool still was there. And she did not like being told that a mile and a half on the sunny side of the trees was the daily amount of exercise which Sir Henry, nearly half a century ago, had prescribed for ladies in her condition. But she had her husband with her and could, with him, be gently rebellious and affectionately disobedient. It is a great thing, at any rate, to be somebody. In her early married days she had felt herself to be snubbed as being merely the Dean's daughter. Her present troubles brought a certain balm with them. No one snubbed her now. If she had a mind for arrowroot, Mrs. Toff would make it herself and suggest a thimbleful of brandy in it with her most coaxing words. Cloaks and petticoats she never saw, and she was quite at liberty to stay away from afternoon church if she pleased.

It had been decided, after many discussions on the subject, that she and her husband should go up to town for a couple of months after Christmas, Lady Amelia going with them to look after the porter and arrowroot, and that in March she should be brought back to Manor Cross with a view to her confinement. This had not been conceded to her easily, but it had at last been conceded. She had learned in secret from her father that he would

come up to town for a part of the time, and after that she never let the question rest till she had carried her point. The Marchioness had been obliged to confess that, in anticipation of her Popenjoy, Sir Henry had recommended a change from the country to town. She did not probably remember that Sir Henry had done so because she had been very cross at the idea of being kept running down to the country all through May. Mary pleaded that it was no use having a house if she were not allowed to see it, that all her things were in London, and at last declared that it would be very convenient to have the baby born in London. Then the Marchioness saw that a compromise was necessary. It was not to be endured that the future Popenjoy, the future Brotherton, should be born in a little house in Munster Court. With many misgivings it was at last arranged that Mary should go to London on the 18th of January, and be brought back on the 10th of March. After many consultations, computations, and calculations, it was considered that the baby would be born somewhere about the 1st of April.

It may be said that things at Manor Cross were quite in a halcyon condition, when suddenly a thunderbolt fell among them. Mr. Knox appeared one day at the house and showed to Lord George a letter from the Marquis. It was written with his usual contempt of all ordinary courtesy of correspondence, but with more than his usual bitterness. It declared the writer's opinion that his brother was a mean fellow, and deserving of no trust in that he had continued to live at the house after having been

desired to leave by its owner; and it went on to give peremptory orders to Mr. Knox to take steps for letting the house at once. This took place at the end of the first week in December. Then there was a postscript to the letter in which the Marquis suggested that Mr. Knox had better take a house for the Marchioness, and apply Mr. Price's rent in the payment for such house. "Of course you will consult my mother," said the postscript; "but it should not be anywhere near Brotherton."

There was an impudence as well as a cruelty about this which almost shook the belief which Lord George still held in the position of an elder brother. Mr. Knox was to take a house; as though his mother and sisters had no rights, no freedom of their own! "Of course I will go," said he, almost pale with anger.

Then Mr. Knox explained his views. It was his intention to write back to the Marquis and to decline to execute the task imposed upon him. The care of the Marquis's property was no doubt his chief mainstay; but there were things, he said, which he could not do. Of course the Marquis would employ someone else, and he must look for his bread elsewhere. But he could not, he said, bring himself to take steps for the letting of Manor Cross as long as the Marchioness was living there.

Of course there was a terrible disturbance in the house. There arose a great question whether the old lady should or should not be told of this new trouble, and it was decided at last that she should for the present be kept in the dark. Mr.

Knox was of opinion that the house never would be let, and that it would not be in his lordship's power to turn them out without procuring for them the use of Cross Hall, in which Mr. Price's newly-married bride had made herself comfortable on a lease of three years. And he was also of opinion that the attempt made by the Marquis to banish his brother was a piece of monstrous tyranny to which no attention should be paid. This he said before all the younger ladies; but to Lord George himself he said even more. He expressed a doubt whether the Marquis could be in his right mind, and added a whisper that the accounts of the Marquis's health were very bad indeed. "Of course he could let the house?" asked Lord George.

"Yes, if he can get anybody to let it for him, and anybody else to take it. But I don't think it ever will be let. He won't quite know what to do when he gets my letter. He can hardly change his agent without coming to London, and he won't like to do that in the winter. He'll write me a very savage letter, and then in a week or two I shall answer him. I don't think I'd disturb the Marchioness if I were you, my lord."

The Marchioness was not disturbed, but Lord George again went up to London, on this occasion occupying the house in Munster Court in solitude. His scruples were all renewed, and it was in vain that Lady Sarah repeated to him all Mr. Knox's arguments. He had been called a mean fellow, and the word rankled with him. He walked about alone thinking of the absolute obedience with which in

early days he had complied with all the behests of his elder brother, and the perfect faith with which in later days he had regarded that brother's interests. He went away swearing to himself that he would never again put his foot within the domain of Manor Cross as long as it was his brother's property. A day might come when he would return there; but Lord George was not a man to anticipate his own prosperity. Mary wished to accompany him; but this was not allowed. The Marchioness inquired a dozen times why he should go away; but there was no one who could tell her.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mrs. Jones's Letter.

A FEW days before Christmas Mary received a long letter from her friend Mrs. Montacute Jones. At this time there was sad trouble again at Manor Cross. Lord George had been away for a fortnight, and no reason for his departure had as yet been given to the Marchioness. She had now become aware that he was not to be at home at Christmas, and she was full of doubt, full of surmises of her own. He must have quarrelled with his sisters! They all assured her that there hadn't been an unpleasant word between him and anyone of them. Then he must have quarrelled with his wife? "Indeed, indeed he has not," said Mary. "He has never quarrelled with me, and he never shall." Then why did he stay away? Business was nonsense. Why was he going to stay away during Christmas? Then it was necessary to tell the old lady a little fib. She was informed that Brotherton had specially desired him to leave the house. This certainly was a fib, as Brotherton's late order had been of a very different nature. "I hope he hasn't done anything to offend his brother again," said the Marchioness. "I wonder whether it's about Popenjoy!" In the midst

of her troubles the poor old woman's wits were apt to wander.

Mary too had become rather cross, thinking that as her husband was up in town she should be allowed to be there too. But it had been conceded by her, and by her father on her behalf, that her town life was not to begin till after Christmas, and now she was unable to prevail. She and the family were in this uncomfortable condition when Mrs. Montacute Jones's letter came for her consolation. As it contained tidings more or less accurate, concerning many persons named in this chronicle, it shall be given entire. Mrs. Montacute Jones was a great writer of letters, and she was wont to communicate many details among her friends and acquaintances respecting one another. It was one of the marvels of the day that Mrs. Jones should have so much information; and no one could say how or whence she got it.

"CURRY HALL, *December 12, 187—*"

Curry Hall was the name of Mr. Jones's seat in Gloucestershire, whereas, as all the world knew, Killancodlem was supposed to belong to Mrs. Jones herself.

"DEAREST LADY GEORGE,—We have been here for the last six weeks, quite quiet. A great deal too quiet for me, but for the three or four winter months I am obliged to give way a little to Mr. Jones. We have had the Mildmays here, because

they didn't seem to have any other place to go to. But I barred the Baroness. I am told that she is now bringing an action against Aunt Ju, who unfortunately wrote the letter which induced the woman to come over from—wherever she came from. Poor Aunt Ju is in a terrible state, and wants her brother to buy the woman off—which he will probably have to do. That's what comes, my dear, of meddling with disabilities. I know my own disabilities, but I never think of interfering with Providence. Mr. Jones was made a man, and I was made a woman. So I put up with it, and I hope you will do the same.

“Mr. and Mrs. Green are here also, and remain till Christmas, when the Giblets are coming. It was the prettiest wedding in the world, and they have been half over Europe since. I am told he's the happiest man in the world, and the very best husband. Old Gossling didn't like it at all, but every stick is entailed, and they say he's likely to have gout in his stomach, so that everything will go pleasantly. Lord Giblett himself is loud against his father, asking everybody whether it was to be expected that in such a matter as that he shouldn't follow his own inclination? I do hope he'll show a little gratitude to me. But it's an ungrateful world, and they'll probably both forget what I did for them.

“And now I want to ask you your opinion about another friend. Don't you think that Jack had better settle down with poor dear Guss? She's here, and upon my word I think she's nearly broken-hearted.

Of course you and I know what Jack has been thinking of lately. But when a child cries for the top brick of the chimney, it is better to let him have some possible toy. You know what top brick he has been crying for. But I'm sure you like him, and so do I, and I think we might do something for him. Mr. Jones would let them a nice little house a few miles from here at a peppercorn rent, and I suppose old Mr. Mildmay could do something. They are engaged after a fashion. She told me all about it the other day. So I've asked him to come down for Christmas, and have offered to put up his horses if he wants to hunt.

"And now, my dear, I want to know what you have heard about Lord Brotherton at Manor Cross. Of course we all know the way he has behaved to Lord George. If I were Lord George I should not pay the slightest attention to him. But I'm told he is in a very low condition—never sees anybody except his courier, and never stirs out of the house. Of course you know that he makes his wife an allowance, and refuses to see her. From what I hear privately, I really do think that he'll not last long. What a blessing it would be! That's plain speaking; but it would be a blessing! Some people manage to live so that everybody will be the better for their dying. I should break my heart if anybody wanted me to die.

"How grand it would be! The young and lovely Marchioness of Brotherton! I'll be bound you think about it less than anybody else, but it would be nice. I wonder whether you'd cut a poor old wo-

man like me, without a handle to her name. And then it would be Popenjoy at once! Only how the bonfires wouldn't burn if it should turn out to be only a disability after all! But we should say, better luck next time, and send you caudle-cups by the dozen. Who wouldn't send a caudle-cup to a real young lovely live Marchioness? I'll be bound your father knows all about it, and has counted it all up a score of times. I suppose it's over forty thousand pounds a year since they took to working the coal at Popenjoy, and whatever the present man has done he can't have clipped the property. He has never gambled, and never spent his income. Italian wives and that sort of thing don't cost so much as they do in England.

"Pray write and tell me all about it. I shall be in town in February, and of course shall see you. I tell Mr. Jones that I can't stand Curry Hall for more than three months. He won't come to town till May, and perhaps when May comes he'll have forgotten all about it. He is very fond of sheep, but I don't think he cares for anything else, unless he has a slight taste for pigs.

"Your affectionate friend,

"G. MONTACUTE JONES."

There was much in this letter that astonished Mary, something that shocked her, but something also that pleased her. The young and lovely Marchioness of Brotherton! Where is the woman who would not like to be a young and lovely Marchioness, so that it had all been come by honestly, that

the husband had been married as husbands ought to be married, and had not been caught like Lord Gibley? And she knew that her old friend—her old friend whom she had not yet known for quite twelve months—was only joking with her in that suggestion as to being cut. What a fate was this in store for her—if it really was in store—that so early in her life she should be called upon to fill so high a place. Then she made some resolutions in her mind that should it be so she would be humble and meek; and a further resolution that she would set her heart upon none of it till it was firmly her own.

But it shocked her that the Marquis should be so spoken of, especially that he should be so spoken of if he were really dying! Plain speaking! Yes, indeed. But such plain speaking was very terrible. This old woman could speak of another nobleman having gout in his stomach as though that were a thing really to be desired. And then that allusion to the Italian wife or wives! Poor Mary blushed as she thought of it.

But there was a paragraph in the letter which interested her as much as the tidings respecting Lord Brotherton. Could it be right that Jack De Baron should be made to marry Guss Mildmay? She thought not, for she knew that he did not love Guss Mildmay. That he should have wanted an impossible brick, whether the highest or lowest brick, was very sad. When children cry for impossible bricks they must of course be disappointed. But she hardly thought that this would be the proper cure for his

disappointment. There had been a moment in which the same idea had suggested itself to her; but now, since her friendship with Jack had been strengthened by his conduct in the Deanery garden, she thought that he might do better with himself than be made by Mrs. Jones to marry Guss Mildmay. Of course she could not interfere, but she hoped that something might prevent Jack De Baron from spending his Christmas at Curry Hall. She answered Mrs. Jones's letter very prettily. She trusted that Lord Giblest might be happy with his wife, even though his father should get well of the gout. She was very sorry to hear that Lord Brotherton was ill. Nothing was known about him at Manor Cross, except that he seemed to be very ill-natured to everybody. She was surprised that anybody should be so ill-natured as he was. If ever she should live to fill a high position she hoped she would be good-natured. She knew that the people she would like best would be those who had been kind to her, and nobody had been so kind as a certain lady named Mrs. Montacute Jones. Then she spoke of her coming trial. "Don't joke with me about it any more, there's a dear woman. They all flutter me here, talking of it always, though they mean to be kind. But it seems to me so serious. I wish that nobody would speak to me of it except George, and he seems to think nothing about it."

Then she came to the paragraph the necessity for writing which had made her answer Mrs. Jones's letter so speedily. "I don't think you ought to persuade anybody to marry anyone. It didn't much

signify, perhaps, with Lord Gibley, as he isn't clever, and I daresay that Miss Green will suit him very well; but, as a rule, I think gentlemen should choose for themselves. In the case you speak of, I don't think he cares for her, and then they would be unhappy." She would not for worlds have mentioned Captain De Baron's name; but she thought that Mrs. Jones would understand her.

Of course Mrs. Jones understood her—had understood more than Mary had intended her to understand. Christmas was over and Mary was up in town when she received Mrs. Jones's rejoinder, but it may as well be given here. "The child who wanted the top brick is here, and I think will content himself with a very much less exalted morsel of the building. I am older than you, my dear, and know better. Our friend is a very good fellow in his way, but there is no reason why he should not bend his neck as well as another. To you, no doubt, he seems to have many graces. He has had the great grace of holding his tongue because he appreciated your character." Mary, as she read this, knew that even Mrs. Montacute Jones could be misinformed now and then. "But I do not know that he is in truth more gracious than others, and I think it quite as well that Miss Mildmay should have the reward of her constancy."

But this was after Christmas, and in the meantime other occurrences had taken place. On the 20th of December Lord George was informed by Mr. Knox that his brother, who was then at Naples,

had been struck by paralysis, and at Mr. Knox's advice he started off for the southern capital of Italy. The journey was a great trouble to him, but this was a duty which he would under no circumstances neglect. The tidings were communicated to Manor Cross, and after due consultation, were conveyed by Lady Sarah to her mother. The poor old lady did not seem to be made very unhappy by them. "Of course I can't go to him," she said; "how could I do it?" When she was told that that was out of the question she subsided again into tranquillity, merely seeming to think it necessary to pay increased attention to Mary; for she was still quite alive to the fact that all this greatly increased the chances that the baby would be Popenjoy; but even in this the poor old lady's mind wandered much, for every now and then she would speak of Popenjoy as though there were a living Popenjoy at the present moment.

Lord George hurried off to Naples, and found that his brother was living at a villa about eight miles from the town. He learned in the city, before he had made his visit, that the Marquis was better, having recovered his speech and apparently the use of his limbs. Still, being at Naples, he found himself bound to go out to the villa. He did so, and when he was there his brother refused to see him. He endeavoured to get what information he could from the doctor; but the doctor was an Italian, and Lord George could not understand him. As far as he could learn, the doctor thought badly of the case; but for the present his patient had so far recovered as to know what he was about. Then Lord

George hurried back to London, having had a most uncomfortable journey in the snow. Come what might, he didn't think that he would ever again take the trouble to pay a visit to his brother. The whole time taken on his journey and for his sojourn in Naples was less than three weeks, and when he returned the new year had commenced.

He went down to Brotherton to bring his wife up to London, but met her at the Deanery, refusing to go to the house. When the Marchioness heard of this—and it became impossible to keep it from her—she declared that it was with herself that her son George must have quarrelled. Then it was necessary to tell the whole truth, or nearly the whole. Brotherton had behaved so badly to his brother that Lord George had refused to enter even the park. The poor old woman was very wretched, feeling in some dim way that she was being robbed of both her sons. "I don't know what I've done," she said, "that everything should be like this. I'm sure I did all I could for them; but George never would behave properly to his elder brother, and I don't wonder that Brotherton feels it. Brotherton always had so much feeling. I don't know why George should be jealous because Popenjoy was born. Why shouldn't his elder brother have a son of his own like anybody else?" And yet whenever she saw Mary, which she did for two or three hours every day, she was quite alive to the coming interest. It was suggested to her that she should be driven into Brotherton, so that she might see George at the Deanery; but her objection to go to the Dean's

house was as strong as was that of Lord George to come to his brother's.

Mary was of course delighted when the hour of her escape came. It had seemed to her that there was especial cruelty in keeping her at Manor Cross while her husband was up in town. Her complaints on this head had of course been checked by her husband's unexpected journey to Naples, as to which she had hardly heard the full particulars till she found herself in the train with him. "After going all that way he wouldn't see you!"

"He neither would see me or send me any message."

"Then he must be a bad man."

"He has lived a life of self-indulgence till he doesn't know how to control a thought or passion. It was something of that kind which was meant when we were told about the rich man and the eye of the needle."

"But you will be a rich man soon, George."

"Don't think of it, Mary; don't anticipate it. God knows I have never longed for it. Your father longs for it."

"Not for his own sake, George."

"He is wrong all the same. It will not make you happier—nor me."

"But, George, when you thought that that little boy was not Popenjoy, you were as anxious as papa to find it all out."

"Right should be done," said Lord George after a pause. "Whether it be for weal or woe, justice should have its way. I never wished that the child

should be other than what he was called; but when there seemed to be reason for doubt I thought that it should be proved."

"It will certainly come to you now, George, I suppose."

"Who can say? I might die to-night, and then Dick Germain, who is a sailor somewhere, would be the next Lord Brotherton."

"Don't talk like that, George."

"He would be if your child happened to be a girl. And Brotherton might live ever so long. I have been so harassed by it all that I am almost sick of the title and sick of the property. I never grudged him anything, and see how he has treated me." Then Mary was very gracious to him and tried to comfort him, and told him that fortune had at any rate given him a loving wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

Back in London.

MARY was fond of her house in Munster Court. It was her own; and her father and Miss Tallowax between them had enabled her to make it very pretty. The married woman who has not some pet lares of her own is but a poor woman. Mary worshipped her little household gods with a perfect religion, and was therefore happy in being among them again; but she was already beginning to feel that in a certain event she would be obliged to leave Munster Court. She knew that as Marchioness of Brotherton she would not be allowed to live there. There was a large brick house, with an unbroken row of six windows on the first floor, in St. James's Square, which she already knew as the town house of the Marquis of Brotherton. It was, she thought, by far the most gloomy house in the whole square. It had been uninhabited for years, the present Marquis having neither resided there nor let it. Her husband had never spoken to her about the house—had never, as far as she could remember, been with her in St. James's Square. She had inquired about it of her father, and he had

once taken her through the square, and had shown her the mansion. But that had been in the days of the former Popenjoy, when she, at any rate, had never thought that the dreary-looking mansion would make or mar her own comfort. Now there had arisen a question of a delicate nature on which she had said a word or two to her husband in her softest whisper. Might not certain changes be made in the house at Munster Court in reference to—well, a nursery. A room to be baby's own she had called it. She had thus made herself understood, though she had not said the word which seemed to imply a plural number. "But you'll be down at Manor Cross," said Lord George.

"You don't mean to keep me there always?"

"No, not always; but when you come back to London it may be to another house."

"You don't mean St. James's Square?" But that was just what he did mean. "I hope we shan't have to live in that prison."

"It's one of the best houses in London," said Lord George, with a certain amount of family pride. "It used to be, at least, before the rich tradesmen had built all those palaces at South Kensington."

"It's dreadfully dingy."

"Because it has not been painted lately. Brother-ton has never done anything like anybody else."

"Couldn't we keep this and let that place?"

"Not very well. My father and my grandfather,

and great-grandfather lived there. I think we had better wait a bit and see." Then she felt sure that the glory was coming. Lord George would never have spoken of her living in St. James's Square had he not felt almost certain that it would soon come about.

Early in February her father came to town, and he was quite certain. "The poor wretch can't speak articulately," he said.

"Who says so, papa."

"I have taken care to find out the truth. What a life! And what a death! He is there all alone. Nobody ever sees him but an Italian doctor. If it's a boy, my dear, he will be my lord as soon as he's born; or, for the matter of that, if it's a girl she will be my lady."

"I wish it wasn't so."

"You must take it all as God sends it, Mary."

"They've talked about it till I'm sick of it," said Mary angrily. Then she checked herself and added: "I don't mean you, papa; but at Manor Cross they all flatter me now because that poor man is dying. If you were me you wouldn't like that."

"You've got to bear it, my dear. It's the way of the world. People at the top of the tree are always flattered. You can't expect that Mary Lovelace and the Marchioness of Brotherton will be treated in the same way."

"Of course it made a difference when I was married."

"But suppose you had married a curate in the neighbourhood?"

"I wish I had," said Mary wildly, "and that someone had given him the living of Pugsty." But it all tended in the same direction. She began to feel now that it must be, and must be soon. She would, she told herself, endeavour to do her duty; she would be loving to all who had been kind to her, and kind even to those who had been unkind. To all of them at Manor Cross she would be a real sister—even to Lady Susanna, whom certainly she had not latterly loved. She would forgive everybody—except one. Adelaide Houghton she never could forgive, but Adelaide Houghton should be her only enemy. It did not occur to her that Jack De Baron had been very nearly as wicked as Adelaide Houghton. She certainly did not intend that Jack De Baron should be one of her enemies.

When she had been in London about a week or two Jack De Baron came to see her. She knew that he had spent his Christmas at Curry Hall, and she knew that Guss Mildmay had also been there. That Guss Mildmay should have accepted such an invitation was natural enough, but she thought that Jack had been very foolish. Why should he have gone to the house when he had known that the girl whom he had promised to marry, but whom he did not intend to marry, was there? And now what was to be the result? She did not think that she could ask him; but she was almost sure that he would tell her.

"I suppose you've been hunting?" she asked.

"Yes; they put up a couple of horses for me, or I couldn't have afforded it."

"She is so good-natured."

"Mrs. Jones! I should think she was; but I'm not quite sure that she intended to be very good-natured to me."

"Why not?" Mary of course understood it all; but she could not pretend to understand it, at any rate as yet.

"Oh, I don't know. It was all fair, and I won't complain. She had got Miss Green off her hands, and therefore she wanted something to do. I'm going to exchange, Lady George, into an Indian regiment."

"You're not in earnest?"

"Quite in earnest. My wing will be at Aden, at the bottom of the Red Sea, for the next year or two. Aden, I'm told, is a charming place."

"I thought it was hot."

"I like hot places; and as I have got rather sick of society I shall do very well there, because there's none. A fellow can't spend any money, except in soda and brandy. I suppose I shall take to drink."

"Don't talk of yourself in that horrid way, Captain De Baron."

"It won't much matter to anyone, for I don't suppose I shall ever come back again. There's a

place called Perim, out in the middle of the sea, which will just suit me. They only send one officer there at a time, and there isn't another soul in the place."

"How dreadful!"

"I shall apply to be left there for five years. I shall get through all my troubles by that time."

"I am sure you won't go at all."

"Why not?"

"Because you have got so many friends here."

"Too many, Lady George. Of course you know what Mrs. Jones has been doing?"

"What has she been doing?"

"She tells you everything, I fancy. She has got it all cut and dry. I'm to be married next May, and am to spend the honeymoon at Curry Hall. Of course I'm to leave the army and put the value of my commission into the Three per Cents. Mr. Jones is to let me have a place called Clover Cottage, down in Gloucestershire, and, I believe, I'm to take a farm and be churchwarden of the parish. After paying my debts we shall have about two hundred a year, which of course will be ample for Clover Cottage. I don't exactly see how I'm to spend my evenings, but I suppose that will come. It's either that or Perim. Which would you advise?"

"I don't know what I ought to say."

"Of course I might cut my throat."

"I wish you wouldn't talk in that way. If it's all a joke I'll take it as a joke."

"It's no joke at all; it's very serious. Mrs. Jones wants me to marry Guss Mildmay."

"And you are engaged to her?"

"Only on certain conditions—which conditions are almost impossible."

"What did you say to—Miss Mildmay at Curry Hall?"

"I told her I should go to Perim."

"And what did she say?"

"Like a brick, she offered to go with me, just as the girl offered to eat the potato parings when the man said that there would not be potatoes enough for both. Girls always say that kind of thing, though, when they are taken at their words, they want bonnets and gloves and fur cloaks."

"And you are going to take her?"

"Not unless I decide upon Clover Cottage. No; if I do go to Perim I think I shall manage to go alone."

"If you don't love her, Captain De Baron, don't marry her."

"There's Giblest doing very well, you know; and I calculate I could spend a good deal of my time at Curry Hall. Perhaps, if we made ourselves useful, they would ask us to Killancodlem. I should manage to be a sort of factotum to old Jones. Don't you think it would suit me?"

"You can't be serious about it."

"Upon my soul, Lady George, I never was so serious in my life. Do you think that I mean nothing because I laugh at myself? You know I don't love her."

"Then say so and have done with it."

"That is so easy to suggest, but so impossible to do. How is a man to tell a girl that he doesn't love her after such an acquaintance as I have had with Guss Mildmay? I have tried to do so, but I couldn't do it. There are men, I believe, hard enough for that; and things are changed now, and the affectation of chivalry has gone by. Women ask men to marry them, and the men laugh and refuse."

"Don't say that, Captain De Baron."

"I'm told that's the way the thing is done now; but I've no strength myself, and I'm not up to it. I'm not at all joking. I think I shall exchange and go away. I've brought my pigs to a bad market, but as far as I can see that is the best that is left for me." Mary could only say that his friends would be very—very sorry to lose him, but that in her opinion anything would be better than marrying a girl whom he did not love.

Courtesies at this time were showered upon Lady George from all sides. Old Lady Brabazon, to whom she had hardly spoken, wrote to her at great length. Mrs. Patmore Green came to her on purpose to talk about her daughter's marriage. "We

are very much pleased of course," said Mrs. Green. "It was altogether a love affair, and the young people are so fond of each other! I do so hope you and she will be friends. Of course her position is not so brilliant as yours, but still it is very good. Poor dear Lord Gossling"—whom, by-the-bye, Mrs. Patmore Green had never seen—"is failing very much; he is a martyr to the gout, and then he is so imprudent."

Lady Mary smiled and was civil, but did not make any promise of peculiarly intimate friendship. Lady Selina Protest came to her with a long story of her wrongs, and a petition that she would take the Fleabody side in the coming contest. It was in vain that she declared that she had no opinion whatsoever as to the rights of women; a marchioness, she was told, would be bound to have opinions, or, at any rate, would be bound to subscribe.

But the courtesy which surprised and annoyed her most was a visit from Adelaide Houghton. She came up to London for a week about the end of February, and had the hardihood to present herself at the house in Munster Court. This was an insult which Mary had by no means expected; she had therefore failed to guard herself against it by any special instructions to her servant. And thus Mrs. Houghton, the woman who had written love-letters to her husband, was shown up into her drawing-room before she had the means of escaping. When the name was announced she felt that she was

trembling. There came across her a feeling that she was utterly incapable of behaving properly in such an emergency. She knew that she blushed up to the roots of her hair. She got up from her seat as she heard the name announced, and then seated herself again before her visitor had entered the room. She did resolve that nothing on earth should induce her to shake hands with the woman. "My dear Lady George," said Mrs. Houghton, hurrying across the room, "I hope you will let me explain."

She had half put out her hand, but had done so in a manner which allowed her to withdraw it without seeming to have had her overture refused.

"I do not know that there is anything to explain," said Mary.

"You will let me sit down?" Mary longed to refuse; but, not quite daring to do so, simply bowed—upon which Mrs. Houghton did sit down. "You are very angry with me, it seems?"

"Well—yes, I am."

"And yet what harm have I done you?"

"None in the least—none at all. I never thought that you could do me any harm."

"Is it wise, Lady George, to give importance to a little trifle?"

"I don't know what you call a trifle."

"I had known him before you did; and, though it had not suited me to become his wife, I had always liked him. Then the intimacy sprang up

again; but what did it amount to? I believe you read some foolish letter?"

"I did read a letter, and I was perfectly sure that my husband had done nothing, I will not say to justify, but even to excuse the writing of it. I am quite aware, Mrs. Houghton, that it was all on one side."

"Did he say so?"

"You must excuse me if I decline altogether to tell you what he said."

"I am sure he did not say that. But what is the use of talking of it at all? Is it necessary, Lady George, that you and I should quarrel about such a thing as that?"

"Quite necessary, Mrs. Houghton."

"Then you must be very fond of quarrelling."

"I never quarrelled with anybody else in my life."

"When you remember how near we are to each other in the country—— I will apologise if you wish it."

"I will remember nothing, and I want no apology. To tell you the truth, I really think that you ought not to have come here."

"It is childish, Lady George, to make so much of it."

"It may be nothing to you. It is a great deal to me. You must excuse me if I say that I really cannot talk to you any more." Then she got up and walked out of the room, leaving Mrs. Houghton

among her treasures. In the dining-room she rang the bell and told the servant to open the door when the lady upstairs came down. After a very short pause, the lady upstairs did come down, and walked out to her carriage with an unabashed demeanour.

After much consideration, Lady George determined that she must tell her husband what had occurred. She was aware that she had been very uncourteous, and was not sure whether in her anger she had not been carried farther than became her. Nothing could, she thought, shake her in her determination to have no further friendly intercourse of any kind with the woman. Not even were her husband to ask her would that be possible. Such a request from him would be almost an insult to her. And no request from anyone else could have any strength, as no one else knew the circumstances of the case. It was not likely that he would have spoken of it—and of her own silence she was quite sure. But how had it come to pass that the woman had had the face to come to her? Could it be that Lord George had instigated her to do so? She never made inquiries of her husband as to where he went and whom he saw. For aught that she knew, he might be in Berkeley Square every day. Then she called to mind Mrs. Houghton's face, with the paint visible on it in the broad day, and her blackened eyebrows, and her great crested helmet of false hair nearly eighteen inches deep, and her affected voice and false manner—and then she told herself that it was impossible that her husband should like such a creature.

"George," she said to him abruptly, as soon as he came home, "who do you think has been here? Mrs. Houghton has been here." Then came that old frown across his brow; but she did not know at first whether it was occasioned by anger against herself or against Mrs. Houghton. "Don't you think it was very unfortunate?"

"What did she say?"

"She wanted me to be friends with her."

"And what did you say?"

"I was very rude to her. I told her that I would never have anything to do with her; and then I left the room, so that she had to get out of the house as she could. Was I not right? You don't want me to know her, do you?"

"Certainly not."

"And I was right."

"Quite right. She must be a very hardened woman."

"Oh, George, dear George! You have made me so happy!" Then she jumped up and threw her arms round him. "I never doubted you for a moment—never, never; but I was afraid you might have thought—— I don't know what I was afraid of, but I was a fool. She is a nasty hardened creature, and I do hate her. Don't you see how she covers herself with paint?"

"I haven't seen her for the last three months."

Then she kissed him again and again, foolishly betraying her past fears. "I am almost sorry I bothered you by telling you, only I didn't like to say nothing about it. It might have come out, and

you would have thought it odd. How a woman can be so nasty I cannot imagine. But I will never trouble you by talking of her again. Only I have told James that she is not to be let into the house."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Last of the Baroness.

AT this time Dr. Olivia Q. Fleabody had become quite an institution in London. She had obtained full though by no means undisputed possession of the great hall in the Marylebone Road, and was undoubtedly for the moment the Queen of the Disabilities. She lectured twice a week to crowded benches. A seat on the platform on these occasions was considered by all high-minded women to be an honour, and the body of the building was always filled by strongly-visaged spinsters and mutinous wives, who twice a week were worked up by Dr. Fleabody to a full belief that a glorious era was at hand in which women would be chosen by constituencies, would wag their heads in courts of law, would buy and sell in Capel Court, and have balances at their bankers'. It was certainly the case that Dr. Fleabody had made proselytes by the hundred, and disturbed the happiness of many fathers of families.

It may easily be conceived that all this was gall and wormwood to the Baroness Banmann. The Baroness, on her arrival in London, had anticipated the success which this low-bred American female

had achieved. It was not simply the honour of the thing—which was very great, and would have been very dear to the Baroness—but the American doctor was making a rapid fortune out of the proceeds of the hall.

She had on one occasion threatened to strike lecturing unless she were allowed a very large percentage on the sum taken at the doors, and the stewards and directors of the institute had found themselves compelled to give way to her demands. She had consequently lodged herself magnificently at the Langham Hotel, had set up her brougham, in which she always had herself driven to the institute, and was asked out to dinner three or four times a week; whereas the Baroness was in a very poor condition. She had indeed succeeded in getting herself invited to Mr. De Baron's house, and from time to time raised a little money from those who were unfortunate enough to come in her way. But she was sensible of her own degradation, and at the same time quite assured that, as a preacher on women's rights at large, she could teach lessons infinitely superior to anything that had come from that impudent but imbecile American.

She had undoubtedly received overtures from the directors of the Institute, of whom poor Aunt Ju had for the moment been the spokeswoman, and in these overtures it had been intimated to her that the directors would be happy to remunerate her for her trouble should the money collected at the hall enable them to do so. The Baroness believed that enormous sums had been received, and was loud in

assuring all her friends that this popularity had in the first place been produced by her own exertions. At any rate she was resolved to seek redress at law, and at last had been advised to proceed conjointly against Aunt Ju, Lady Selina Protest, and the bald-headed old gentleman. The business had now been brought into proper form, and the trial was to take place in March.

All this was the cause of much trouble to poor Mary, and of very great vexation to Lord George. When the feud was first becoming furious, an enormous advertisement was issued by Dr. Fleabody's friends, in which her cause was advocated, and her claims recapitulated. And to this was appended a list of the nobility, gentry, and people of England who supported the disabilities generally and her cause in particular. Among these names, which were very numerous, appeared that of Lady George Germain. This might probably have escaped both her notice and her husband's had not the paper been sent to her, with usual friendly zeal, by old Lady Brabazon. "Oh, George," she said, "look here. What right have they to say so? I never patronised anything. I went there once when I came to London first, because Miss Mildmay asked me."

"You should not have gone," said he.

"We have had all that before, and you need not scold me again. There couldn't be any great harm in going to hear a lecture." This occurred just previous to her going down to Manor Cross—that

journey which was to be made for so important an object.

Then Lord George did—just what he ought not to have done. He wrote an angry letter to Miss Fleabody, as he called her, complaining bitterly of the insertion of his wife's name. Dr. Fleabody was quite clever enough to make fresh capital out of this. She withdrew the name, explaining that she had been ordered to do so by the lady's husband, and implying that thereby additional evidence was supplied that the Disabilities of Women were absolutely crushing to the sex in England. Mary, when she saw this—and the paper did not reach her till she was at Manor Cross—was violent in her anxiety to write herself, in her own name, and disclaim all disabilities; but her husband by this time had been advised to have nothing further to do with Dr. Fleabody, and Mary was forced to keep her indignation to herself.

But worse than this followed the annoyance of the advertisement. A man came all the way down from London for the purpose of serving Lady George with a subpoena to give evidence at the trial on the part of the Baroness. Lord George was up in London at the time, never having entered the house at Manor Cross, or even the park, since his visit to Italy. The consternation of the ladies may be imagined. Poor Mary was certainly not in a condition to go into a court of law, and would be less so on the day fixed for the trial. And yet this awful document seemed to her and to her sisters-in-law to be so imperative as to admit of no escape.

It was in vain that Lady Sarah, with considerable circumlocution, endeavoured to explain to the messenger the true state of the case. The man could simply say that he was only a messenger, and had now done his work. Looked at in any light, the thing was very terrible. Lord George might probably even yet be able to run away with her to some obscure corner of the Continent in which messengers from the Queen's judges would not be able to find her; and she might perhaps bear the journey without injury. But then what would become of a baby—perhaps of a Popenjoy—so born? There were many who still thought that the Marquis would go before the baby came; and, in that case, the baby would at once be a Popenjoy. What a condition was this for a Marchioness to be in at the moment of the birth of her eldest child! "But I don't know anything about the nasty woman!" said Mary, through her tears.

"It is such a pity that you should ever have gone," said Lady Susanna, shaking her head.

"It wasn't wicked to go," said Mary, "and I won't be scolded about it any more. You went to a lecture yourself when you were in town, and they might just as well have sent for you."

Lady Sarah promised her that she should not be scolded, and was very keen in thinking what steps had better be taken. Mary wished to run off to the Deanery at once, but was told that she had better not do so till an answer had come to the letter which was of course written by that day's

post to Lord George. There were still ten days to the trial, and twenty days, by computation, to the great event. There were, of course, various letters written to Lord George. Lady Sarah wrote very sensibly, suggesting that he should go to Mr. Stokes, the family lawyer. Lady Susanna was full of the original sin of that unfortunate visit to the Disabilities. She was, however, of opinion that if Mary was concealed in a certain room at Manor Cross, which might, she thought, be sufficiently warmed and ventilated for health, the judges of the Queen's Bench would never be able to find her. The baby in that case would have been born at Manor Cross, and posterity would know nothing about the room. Mary's letter was almost hysterically miserable. She knew nothing about the horrid people. What did they want her to say? All she had done was to go to a lecture, and to give the wicked woman a guinea. Wouldn't George come and take her away? She wouldn't care where she went. Nothing on earth should make her go up and stand before the judges. It was, she said, very cruel, and she did hope that George would come to her at once. If he didn't come she thought that she would die.

Nothing, of course, was said to the Marchioness, but it was found impossible to keep the matter from Mrs. Toff. Mrs. Toff was of opinion that the bit of paper should be burned, and that no further notice should be taken of the matter at all. "If they don't go they has to pay ten pounds," said Mrs. Toff with great authority — Mrs. Toff remembering that a

brother of hers, who had "forgotten himself in liquor" at the Brotherton assizes, had been fined ten pounds for not answering to his name as a jurymen. "And then they don't really have to pay it," said Mrs. Toff, who remembered also that the good-natured judge had not at last exacted the penalty. But Lady Sarah could not look at the matter in that light. She was sure that if a witness were really wanted, that witness could not escape by paying a fine.

The next morning there came a heartrending letter from Aunt Ju. She was very sorry that Lady George should have been so troubled—but then let them think of her trouble, of her misery! She was quite sure that it would kill her—and it would certainly ruin her. That odious Baroness had summoned everybody that had ever befriended her. Captain De Baron had been summoned, and the Marquis, and Mrs. Montacute Jones. And the whole expense, according to Aunt Ju, would fall upon her; for it seemed to be the opinion of the lawyers that she had hired the Baroness. Then she said some very severe things against the Disabilities generally. There was that woman Fleabody making a fortune in their hall, and would take none of this expense upon herself. She thought that such things should be left to men, who after all were not so mean as women—so, at least, said Aunt Ju.

And then there was new cause for wonderment. Lord Brotherton had been summoned, and would Lord Brotherton come? They all believed that he was dying, and, if so, surely he could not be made

to come. "But is it not horrible," said Lady Susanna, "that people of rank should be made subject to such an annoyance? If anybody can summon anybody, nobody can ever be sure of herself!"

On the next morning Lord George himself came down to Brotherton, and Mary, with a carriageful of precautions, was sent into the Deanery to meet him. The Marchioness discovered that the journey was to be made, and was full of misgivings and full of inquiries. In her present condition, the mother-expectant ought not to be allowed to make any journey at all. The Marchioness remembered how Sir Henry had told her, before Popenjoy was born, that all carriage exercise was bad. And why should she go to the Deanery? Who could say whether the Dean would let her come away again? What a feather it would be in the Dean's cap if the next Popenjoy were born at the Deanery. It was explained to her that in no other way could she see her husband. Then the poor old woman was once more loud in denouncing the misconduct of her youngest son to the head of the family.

Mary made the journey in perfect safety, and then was able to tell her father the whole story. "I never heard of anything so absurd in my life," said the Dean.

"I suppose I must go, papa?"

"Not a yard."

"But won't they come and fetch me?"

"Fetch you? No."

"Does it mean nothing?"

"Very little. They won't attempt to examine half the people they have summoned. That Baroness probably thinks that she will get money out of you. If the worst comes to the worst, you must send a medical certificate."

"Will that do?"

"Of course it will. When George is here we will get Dr. Loftly, and he will make it straight for us. You need not trouble yourself about it at all. Those women at Manor Cross are old enough to have known better."

Lord George came and was very angry. He quite agreed as to Dr. Loftly, who was sent for, and who did give a certificate—and who took upon himself to assure Lady George that all the judges in the land could not enforce her attendance as long as she had that certificate in her hands. But Lord George was vexed beyond measure that his wife's name should have been called in question, and could not refrain himself from a cross word or two. "It was so imprudent your going to such a place!"

"Oh, George, are we to have that all again?"

"Why shouldn't she have gone?" asked the Dean.

"Are you in favour of rights of women?"

"Not particularly;—though, if there be any rights which they haven't got, I thoroughly wish that they might get them. I certainly don't believe in the Baroness Banmann, nor yet in Dr. Fleabody; but I don't think they could have been wrong in going

in good company to hear what a crazy old woman might have to say."

"It was very foolish," said Lord George. "See what has come of it!"

"How could I tell, George? I thought you had promised that you wouldn't scold any more. Nasty fat old woman! I'm sure I didn't want to hear her." Then Lord George went back to town with the medical certificate in his pocket, and Mary, being in her present condition, afraid of the authorities, was unable to stay and be happy even for one evening with her father.

During the month the Disabilities created a considerable interest throughout London, of which Dr. Fleabody reaped the full advantage. The Baroness was so loud in her clamours that she forced the question of the Disabilities on the public mind generally, and the result was that the world flocked to the Institute. The Baroness, as she heard of this, became louder and louder. It was not this that she wanted. Those who wished to sympathise with her should send her money—not go to the hall to hear that loud imbecile American female! The Baroness, when she desired to be-little the doctor, always called her a female. And the Baroness, though in truth she was not personally attractive, did contrive to surround herself with supporters, and in these days moved into comfortable lodgings in Wigmore Street. Very few were heard to speak in her favour, but they who contributed to the relief of her necessities were many. It was

found to be almost impossible to escape from her without leaving some amount of money in her hands. And then, in a happy hour, she came at last across an old gentleman who did appreciate her and her wrongs. How it was that she got an introduction to Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs was not, I think, ever known. It is not improbable that having heard of his soft heart, his peculiar propensities, and his wealth, she contrived to introduce herself. It was, however, suddenly understood that Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs, who was a bachelor and very rich, had taken her by the hand, and intended to bear all the expenses of the trial. It was after the general intimation which had been made to the world in this matter that the summons for Lady Mary had been sent down to Manor Cross.

And now in these halcyon days of March the Baroness also had her brougham and was to be seen everywhere. How she did work! The attorneys who had the case in hand found themselves unable to secure themselves against her. She insisted on seeing the barristers, and absolutely did work her way into the chambers of that discreet junior Mr. Stuffenruff. She was full of her case, full of her coming triumph. She would teach women like Miss Julia Mildmay and Lady Selina Protest what it was to bamboozle a Baroness of the Holy Roman Empire! And as for the American female——

“You’ll put her pipe out,” suggested Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs, who was not superior to a mild joke.

"Stop her from piping altogether in dis contry," said the Baroness, who in the midst of her wrath and zeal and labour was superior to all jokes.

Two days before that fixed for the trial there fell a great blow upon those who were interested in the matter—a blow that was heavy on Mr. Cœlebs, but heavier still on the attorneys. The Baroness had taken herself off, and when inquiries were made it was found that she was at Madrid. Mr. Snape, one of the lawyers, was the person who first informed Mr. Cœlebs, and did so in a manner which clearly implied that he expected Mr. Cœlebs to pay the bill. Then Mr. Snape encountered a terrible disappointment, and Mr. Cœlebs was driven to confess his own disgrace. He had, he said, never undertaken to pay the cost of the trial, but he had, unfortunately, given the lady a thousand pounds to enable her to pay the expenses herself. Mr. Snape expostulated, and, later on, urged with much persistency, that Mr. Cœlebs had more than once attended in person at the office of Messrs. Snape and Cashett. But in this matter the lawyers did not prevail. They had taken their orders from the lady, and must look to the lady for payment. They who best knew Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs thought that he had escaped cheaply, as there had been many fears that he should make the Baroness altogether his own.

"I am so glad she has gone," said Mary, when she heard the story. "I should never have felt safe while that woman was in the country. I'm quite

sure of one thing: I'll never have anything more to do with disabilities. George need not be afraid about that."

CHAPTER XIX.

The News comes home.

During those last days of the glory of the Barone-
ness, when she was driving about London under
the auspices of Philogène Cœles in her private
brougham, and talking to everyone of the certainty
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When Lord George argued that he would in all probability be too late, Lady Sarah explained that the last moments of a Marquis of Brotherton could not have come as long as his body was above ground.

So urged, the poor man started again, and found his brother still alive, but senseless. This was towards the end of March, and it is hoped that the reader will remember the event which was to take place on the 1st of April. The coincidence of the two things added of course very greatly to his annoyance. Telegrams might come to him twice a day, but no telegram could bring him back in a flash when the moment of peril should arrive, or enable him to enjoy the rapture of standing at his wife's bedside when that peril should be over. He felt, as he went away from his brother's villa to the nearest hotel—for he would not sleep nor eat in the villa—that he was a man marked out for misfortune. When he returned to the villa on the next morning the Marquis of Brotherton was no more. His lordship had died in the forty-fourth year of his age, on the 30th March, 187—.

The Marquis of Brotherton was dead, and Lord George Germain was Marquis of Brotherton, and would be so called by all the world as soon as his brother was decently hidden under the ground. It concerns our story now to say that Mary Lovelace was Marchioness of Brotherton, and that the Dean of Brotherton was the father-in-law of a Marquis, and would, in all probability, be the progenitor of a

long line of Marquises. Lord George, as soon as the event was known, caused telegrams to be sent to Mr. Knox, to Lady Sarah—and to the Dean. He had hesitated about the last, but his better nature at last prevailed. He was well aware that no one was so anxious as the Dean, and though he disliked and condemned the Dean's anxiety, he remembered that the Dean had at any rate been a loving father to his wife, and a very liberal father-in-law.

Mr. Knox, when he received the news, went at once to Mr. Stokes, and the two gentlemen were not long in agreeing that a very troublesome and useless person had been removed out of the world. "Oh yes; there's a will," said Mr. Stokes in answer to an inquiry from Mr. Knox, "made while he was in London the other day, just before he started—as bad a will as a man could make; but he couldn't do very much harm. Every acre was entailed."

"How about the house in town?" asked Mr. Knox.

"Entailed on the baby about to be born, if he happens to be a boy."

"He didn't spend his income?" suggested Mr. Knox.

"He muddled a lot of money away; but since the coal came up he couldn't spend it all, I should say."

"Who gets it?" asked Mr. Knox, laughing.

"We shall see that when the will is read," said the attorney with a smile.

The news was brought out to Lady Sarah as quick as the very wretched pony which served for the Brotherton telegraph express could bring it. The hour which was lost in getting the pony ready, perhaps, did not signify much. Lady Sarah at the moment was busy with her needle, and her sisters were with her. "What is it?" said Lady Susanna, jumping up. Lady Sarah, with cruel delay, kept the telegram for a moment in her hand. "Do open it," said Lady Amelia; "is it from George? Pray open it; pray do!" Lady Sarah, feeling certain of the contents of the envelope, and knowing the importance of the news, slowly opened the cover. "It is all over," she said. "Poor Brotherton!" Lady Amelia burst into tears. "He was never so very unkind to me," said Lady Susanna, with her handkerchief up to her eyes. "I cannot say that he was good to me," said Lady Sarah, "but it may be that I was hard to him. May God Almighty forgive him all that he did amiss!"

Then there was a consultation held, and it was decided that Mary and the Marchioness must both be told at once. "Mamma will be dreadfully cut up," said Lady Susanna. Then Lady Amelia suggested that their mother's attention should be at once drawn off to Mary's condition, for the Marchioness at this time was much worried in her feelings about Mary—as to whom it now seemed that some error must have been made. The calculations had not been altogether exact. So at least, judging from Mary's condition, they all now thought at Manor Cross. Mrs. Toff was quite sure, and the Marchio-

ness was perplexed in her memory as to certain positive information which had been whispered into her ear by Sir Henry just before the birth of that unfortunate Popenjoy, who was now lying dead as Lord Brotherton at Naples.

The telegram had arrived in the afternoon at the hour in which Mary was accustomed to sit in the easy-chair with the Marchioness. The penalty had now been reduced to an hour a day, and this, as it happened, was the hour. The Marchioness had been wandering a good deal in her mind. From time to time she expressed her opinion that Brotherton would get well and would come back; and she would then tell Mary how she ought to urge her husband to behave well to his elder brother, always asserting that George had been stiff-necked and perverse. But in the midst of all this she would refer every minute to Mary's coming baby as the coming Popenjoy—not a possible Popenjoy at some future time, but the immediate Popenjoy of the hour—to be born a Popenjoy! Poor Mary, in answer to all this, would agree with everything. She never contradicted the old lady, but sat longing that the hour might come to an end.

Lady Sarah entered the room, followed by her two sisters. "Is there any news?" asked Mary.

"Has Brotherton come back?" demanded the Marchioness.

"Dear mamma!" said Lady Sarah—and she went

up and knelt down before her mother and took her hand.

"Where is he?" asked the Marchioness.

"Dear mamma! He has gone away—beyond all trouble."

"Who has gone away?"

"Brotherton is—dead, mamma. This is a telegram from George." The old woman looked bewildered, as though she did not as yet quite comprehend what had been said to her. "You know," continued Lady Sarah, "that he was so ill that we all expected this."

"Expected what?"

"That my brother could not live."

"Where is George? What has George done? If George had gone to him—— Oh me! Dead! He is not dead! And what has become of the child?"

"You should think of Mary, mamma."

"My dear, of course I think of you. I am thinking of nothing else. I should say it would be Friday. Sarah, you don't mean to say that Brotherton is—dead?" Lady Sarah merely pressed her mother's hand, and looked into the old lady's face. "Why did not they let me go to him? And is Popenjoy dead also?"

"Dear mamma, don't you remember?" said Lady Susanna.

"Yes; I remember. George was determined it should be so. Ah me! ah me! Why should I have lived to hear this?" After that it was in vain that they told her of Mary and of the baby that was about to be born. She wept herself into hysterics—was taken away and put to bed; and then soon wept herself to sleep.

Mary during all this had said not a word. She had felt that the moment of her exaltation—the moment in which she had become the mistress of the house and of everything around it—was not a time in which she could dare even to speak to the bereaved mother. But when the two younger sisters had gone away with the Marchioness, she asked after her husband. Then Lady Sarah showed her the telegram in which Lord George, after communicating the death of his brother, had simply said that he should himself return home as quickly as possible. "It has come very quick," said Lady Sarah.

"What has come?"

"Your position, Mary. I hope—I hope you will bear it well."

"I hope so," said Mary almost sullenly. But she was awestruck, and not sullen.

"It will all be yours now—the rank, the wealth, the position, the power of spending money, and tribes of friends anxious to share your prosperity. Hitherto you have only seen the gloom of this place, which to you has of course been dull. Now

it will be lighted up, and you can make it gay enough."

"This is not a time to think of gaiety," said Mary.

"Poor Brotherton was nothing to you. I do not think you ever saw him."

"Never."

"He was nothing to you. You cannot mourn."

"I do mourn. I wish he had lived. I wish the boy had lived. If you have thought that I wanted all this, you have done me wrong. I have wanted nothing but to have George to live with me. If anybody thinks that I married him because all this might come—oh, they do not know me."

"I know you, Mary."

"Then you will not believe that."

"I do not believe it. I have never believed it. I know that you are good and disinterested and true of heart. I have loved you dearly and more dearly as I have seen you every day. But, Mary, you are fond of what the world calls—pleasure."

"Yes," said Mary, after a pause, "I am fond of pleasure. Why not? I hope I am not fond of doing harm to anyone."

"If you will only remember how great are your duties. You may have children to whom you may do harm. You have a husband, who will now have

many cares, and to whom much harm may be done. Among women you will be the head of a noble family, and may grace or disgrace them all by your conduct."

"I will never disgrace them," she said proudly.

"Not openly, not manifestly, I am sure. Do you think that there are no temptations in your way?"

"Everybody has temptations."

"Who will have more than you? Have you thought that every tenant, every labourer on the estate will have a claim on you?"

"How can I have thought of anything yet?"

"Don't be angry with me, dear, if I bid you think of it. I think of it—more, I know, than I ought to do. I have been so placed that I could do but little good and little harm to others than myself. The females of a family such as ours, unless they marry, are very insignificant in the world. ~~You~~ who but a few years ago were a little school-girl in Brotherton have now been put over all our heads."

"I didn't want to be put over anybody's head."

"Fortune has done it for you, and your own attractions. But I was going to say that, little as has been my power and low as is my condition, I have loved the family and striven to maintain its respectability. There is not, I think, a face on the estate

I do not know. I shall have to go now and see them no more."

"Why should you go?"

"It will probably be proper. No married man likes to have his unmarried sisters in his house."

"I shall like you. You shall never go."

"Of course I shall go with mamma and the others. But I would have you sometimes think of me and those I have cared for, and I would have you bear in mind that the Marchioness of Brotherton should have more to do than to amuse herself."

Whatever assurances Mary might have made or have declined to make in answer to this were stopped by the entrance of a servant, who came to inform Lady George that her father was below. The Dean too had received his telegram, and had at once ridden over to greet the new Marchioness of Brotherton.

Of all those who first heard the news, the Dean's feelings were by far the strongest. It cannot be said of any of the Germaines that there was sincere and abiding grief at the death of the late Marquis. The poor mother was in such a state, was mentally so weak, that she was in truth no longer capable of strong grief or strong joy. And the man had been, not only so bad but so injurious also, to all connected with him—had contrived of late to make his whole family so uncomfortable—that he had worn

out even that enduring love which comes of custom. He had been a blister to them—assuring them constantly that he would ever be a blister; and they could not weep in their hearts because the blister was removed. But neither did they rejoice. Mary, when in her simple language she had said that she did not want it, had spoken the plain truth. Munster Court, with her husband's love and the power to go to Mrs. Jones's parties, sufficed for her ambition. That her husband should be gentle with her, should caress her as well as love her, was all the world to her. She feared rather than coveted the title of Marchioness, and dreaded that gloomy house in the square with all her heart. But to the Dean the triumph was a triumph indeed, and the joy was a joy! He had set his heart upon it from the first moment in which Lord George had been spoken of as a suitor for his daughter's hand—looking forward to it with the assured hope of a very sanguine man. The late Marquis had been much younger than he, but he calculated that his own life had been wholesome, while that of the Marquis was the reverse. Then had come the tidings of the Marquis's marriage. That had been bad;—but he had again told himself how probable it was that the Marquis should have no son. And then the lord had brought home a son. All suddenly there had come to him the tidings that a brat called Popenjoy—a brat who in life would crush all his hopes—was already in the house at Manor Cross! He would not for a moment believe in the brat. He would prove that the boy was not Popenjoy, though he should have to spend

his last shilling in doing so. He had set his heart upon the prize, and he would allow nothing to stand in his way.

And now the prize had come before his daughter had been two years married, before the grandchild was born on whose head was to be accumulated all these honours! There was no longer any doubt. The Marquis was gone, and that false Popenjoy was gone; and his daughter was the wife of the reigning lord, and the child—his grandchild was about to be born. He was sure that the child would be a boy! But even were a girl the eldest, there would be time enough for boys after that. There surely would be a real Popenjoy before long.

And what was he to gain—he himself? He often asked himself the question, but could always answer it satisfactorily. He had risen above his father's station by his own intellect and industry so high as to be able to exalt his daughter among the highest in the land. He could hardly have become a Marquis himself. That career could not have been open to him; but a sufficiency of the sweets of the peerage would be his own if he could see his daughter a Marchioness. And now that was her rank. Fate could not take it away from her. Though Lord George were to die to-morrow, she would still be a Marchioness, and the coming boy, his grandson would be the Marquis. He himself was young for his age. He might yet live to hear his grandson make a speech in the House of Commons as Lord Popenjoy.

He had been out about the city and received the telegram at three o'clock. He felt at the moment intensely grateful to Lord George for having sent it—as he would have been full of wrath had none been sent to him. There was no reference to "Poor Brotherton!" on his tongue; no reference to "Poor Brotherton!" in his heart. The man had grossly maligned his daughter to his own ears, had insulted him with bitter malignity, and was his enemy. He did not pretend to himself that he felt either sorrow or pity. The man had been a wretch and his enemy, and was now dead; and he was thoroughly glad that the wretch was out of his way. "Marchioness of Brotherton!" he said to himself, as he rested for a few minutes alone in his study. He stood with hands in his pockets, looking up at the ceiling, and realising it all. Yes; all that was quite true which had been said to himself more than once. He had begun his life as a stable-boy. He could remember the time when his father touched his hat to everybody that came into the yard. Nevertheless he was Dean of Brotherton—and so much a Dean as to have got the better of all enemies in the Close. And his daughter was Marchioness of Brotherton. She would be Mary to him, and would administer to his little comforts when men descended from the comrades of William the Conqueror would treat her with semi-regal respect. He told himself that he was sure of his daughter. Then he ordered his horse, and started off to ride to Manor Cross. He did not doubt but that she knew it already, but still it was necessary that

she should hear it from his lips and he from hers. As he rode proudly beneath the Manor Cross oaks he told himself again and again that they would all belong to his grandson.

When the Dean was announced Mary almost feared to see him—or rather feared that expression of triumph which would certainly be made both by his words and manner. All that Lady Sarah had said had entered into her mind. There were duties incumbent on her which would be very heavy, for which she felt that she could hardly be fit—and the first of these duties was to abstain from pride as to her own station in life. But her father, she knew, would be very proud, and would almost demand pride from her. She hurried down to him nevertheless. Were she ten times a Marchioness, next to her husband her care would be due to him. What daughter had ever been beloved more tenderly than she? Administer to him! Oh yes, she would do that as she had always done. She rushed into his arms in the little parlour and then burst into tears.

“My girl,” he said, “I congratulate you.”

“No—no, no.”

“Yes, yes, yes. Is it not better in all ways that it should be so? I do congratulate you. Hold up your head, dear, and bear it well.”

“Oh, papa, I shall never bear it well.”

“No woman that was ever born has, I believe, borne it better than you will. No woman was ever more fit to grace a high position. My own girl!”

"Yes, papa, your own girl. But I wish—I wish——"

"All that I have wished has come about." She shuddered as she heard these words, remembering that two deaths had been necessary for this fruition of his desires. But he repeated his words. "All that I have wished has come about. And, Mary, let me tell you this—you should in no wise be afraid of it, nor should you allow yourself to think of it as though there were anything to be regretted. Which do you believe would make the better peer—your husband or that man who has died?"

"Of course George is ten times the best."

"Otherwise he would be very bad. But no degree of comparison would express the difference. Your husband will add an honour to his rank." She took his hand and kissed it as he said this—which certainly would not have been said had not that telegram come direct to the Deanery. "And, looking to the future, which would probably make the better peer in coming years—the child born of that man and woman, and bred by them as they would have bred it, or your child—yours and your husband's? And here, in the country—from which lord would the tenants receive the stricter justice, and the people the more enduring kindness? Don't you know that he disgraced his order, and that the woman was unfit to bear the name which rightly or wrongly she had assumed? You will be fit."

"No, papa."

"Excuse me, dear. I am praising myself rather

than you when I say—yes. But though I praise myself, it is a matter as to which I have no shadow of doubt. There can be nothing to regret—no cause for sorrow. With the inmates of this house custom demands the decency of outward mourning; but there can be no grief of heart. The man was a wild beast, destroying everybody and everything that came near him. Only think how he treated your husband.”

“He is dead, papa.”

“I thank God that he has gone. I cannot bring myself to lie about it. I hate such lying. To me it is unmanly. Grief or joy, regrets or satisfaction, when expressed, should always be true. It is a grand thing to rise in the world. The ambition to do so is the very salt of the earth. It is the parent of all enterprise, and the cause of all improvement. They who know no such ambition are savages and remain savage. As far as I can see, among us Englishmen such ambition is healthily and happily almost universal, and on that account we stand high among the citizens of the world. But, owing to false teaching, men are afraid to own aloud a truth which is known to their own hearts. I am not afraid to do so, and I would not have you afraid. I am proud that by one step after another I have been able so to place you and so to form you that you should have been found worthy of rank much higher than my own. And I would have you proud also and equally ambitious for your child. Let him be the Duke of Brotherton. Let him be brought up to be one of England’s statesmen, if God shall give him

intellect for the work. Let him be seen with the George and Garter, and be known throughout Europe as one of England's worthiest worthies. Though not born as yet, his career should already be a care to you. And that he may be great you should rejoice that you yourself are great already."

After that he went away, leaving messages for Lord George and the family. He bade her tell Lady Sarah that he would not intrude on the present occasion, but that he hoped to be allowed to see the ladies of the family very shortly after the funeral.

Poor Mary could not but be bewildered by the difference of the two lessons she had received on this the first day of her assured honours. And she was the more perplexed because both her instructors had appeared to her to be right in their teaching. The pagan exaltation of her father at the death of his enemy she could put on one side, excusing it by the remembrance of the terrible insult which she knew that he had received. But the upshot of his philosophy she did receive as true, and she declared to herself that she would harbour in her heart of hearts the lessons which he had given her as to her own child, lessons which must be noble as they tended to the well-being of the world at large. To make her child able to do good to others, to assist in making him able and anxious to do so—to train him from the first in that way—what wish could be more worthy of a mother than this? But yet the humility and homely carefulness inculcated by Lady Sarah—was not that lesson also true? As-

surely yes! And yet how should she combine the two?

She was unaware that within herself there was a power, a certain intellectual alembic of which she was quite unconscious, by which she could distil the good of each, and quietly leave the residuum behind her as being of no moment.

CHAPTER XX.

The Will.

LORD GEORGE came back to England as quick as the trains would carry him, and with him came the sad and mournful burden which had to be deposited in the vaults of the parish church at Manor Cross. There must be a decent tombstone now that the life was gone, with decent words upon it, and a decent effigy—even though there had been nothing decent in the man's life. The long line of past Marquises must be perpetuated, and Frederic Augustus, the tenth peer of the name, must be made to lie with the others. Lord George therefore—for he was still Lord George till after the funeral—travelled with his sad burden, some deputy undertaker having special charge of it, and rested for a few hours in London. Mr. Knox met him in Mr. Stokes's chambers, and there he learned that his brother, who had made many wills in his time, had made one last will just before he left London, after his return from Rudham Park. Mr. Stokes took him aside, and told him that he would find the will to be unfavourable. "I thought the property was entailed," said Lord George very calmly. Mr. Stokes assented, with many assurances as to the impregnability of the family acres and the

family houses; but added that there was money, and that the furniture had belonged to the late Marquis to dispose of as he pleased. "It is a matter of no consequence," said Lord George, whom the loss of the money and furniture did not in truth at all vex.

Early on the following morning he went down to Brotherton, leaving the undertakers to follow him as quickly as they might. He could enter the house now, and to him, as he was driven home under the oaks, no doubt there came some idea of his own possession of them. But the idea was much less vivid than the Dean's, and was chiefly confined to the recollection that no one could now turn him out of the home in which he had been born, and in which his mother and sisters and wife were living. Had his eldest brother been a man of whom he could have been proud, I almost think he would have been more contented as a younger brother. "It is over at last," were the first words he said to his wife, not finding it to be more important that his greatness was beginning than that his humiliation should be brought to an end.

The funeral took place with all the state that undertakers could give to it in a little village, but with no other honours. Lord George was the chief mourner and almost the only one. One or two neighbours came — Mr. De Baron, from Rudham Park, and such of the farmers as had been long on the land, among them being Mr. Price. But there was one person among the number whom no one had expected. This was Jack De Baron. "He has

been mentioned in the will," said Mr. Stokes very gravely to Lord George, "and perhaps you would not object to my asking him to be present." Lord George did not object, though certainly Captain De Baron was the last person whom he would have thought of asking to Manor Cross on any occasion. He was made welcome, however, with a grave courtesy.

"What on earth has brought you here?" said old Mr. De Baron to his cousin.

"Don't in the least know! Got a letter from a lawyer, saying I had better come. Thought everybody was to be here who had ever seen him."

"He hasn't left you money, Jack," said Mr. De Baron.

"What will you give for my chance?" said Jack. But Mr. De Baron, though he was much given to gambling speculations, did not on this occasion make an offer.

After the funeral, which was sadder even than funerals are in general though no tear was shed, the will was read in the library at Manor Cross, Lord George being present, together with Mr. Knox, Mr. Stokes, and the two De Barons. The Dean might have wished to be there; but he had written early on that morning an affectionate letter to his son-in-law, excusing himself from being present at the funeral. "I think you know," he had said, "that I would do anything either to promote your welfare or to gratify your feelings, but there had unfortunately been that between me and the late Marquis which would make my attendance seem to be a

mockery." He did not go near Manor Cross on that day; but no one knew better than he—not even Mr. Knox himself—that the dead lord had possessed no power of alienating a stick or a brick upon the property. The will was very short, and the upshot of it was that every shilling of which the Marquis died possessed, together with his house at Como and the furniture contained in the three houses, was left to our old friend Jack De Baron. "I took the liberty," said Mr. Stokes, "to inform his lordship that should he die before his wife, his widow would be entitled to a third of his personal property. He replied that whatever his widow could claim by law, she could get without any act of his. I mention this, as Captain De Baron may perhaps be willing that the widow of the late Marquis may be at once regarded as possessed of a third of the property."

"Quite so," said Jack, who had suddenly become as solemn and funereal as Mr. Stokes himself. He was now engaged to Guss Mildmay with a vengeance.

When the solemnity of the meeting was over, Lord George—or the Marquis, as he must now be called—congratulated the young heir with exquisite grace. "I was so severed from my brother of late," he said, "that I had not known of the friendship."

"Never saw him in my life till I met him down at Rudham," said Jack. "I was civil to him there because he seemed to be ill. He sent me once to fetch a ten-pound note. I thought it odd, but I

went. After that he seemed to take to me a good deal."

"He took to you to some purpose, Captain De Baron. As to me, I did not want it, and certainly should not have got it. You need not for a moment think that you are robbing us."

"That is so good of you," said Jack, whose thoughts, however, were too full of Guss Mildmay to allow of any thorough enjoyment of his unexpected prosperity.

"Stokes says that after the widow is paid, and the legacy duty, there will be eight—and twenty—thousand pounds!" whispered Mr. De Baron to his relative. "By heavens! you are a lucky fellow."

"I am rather lucky."

"It will be fourteen hundred a year, if you only look out for a good investment. A man with ready money at his own disposal can always get five per cent. at least. I never heard of such a fluke in my life."

"It was a fluke, certainly."

"You'll marry now and settle down, I suppose?"

"I suppose I shall," said Jack. "One has to come to that kind of thing at last. I knew when I was going to Rudham that some d——d thing would come of it. Oh—of course I'm awfully glad. It's sure to come sooner or later, and I suppose I've had my run. I've just seen Stokes, and he says I'm to go to him in about a month's time. I thought I should have got some of it to-morrow."

"My dear fellow, I can let you have a couple of hundreds, if you want them," said Mr. De Baron,

who had never hitherto been induced to advance a shilling when his young cousin had been needy.

Mr. Stokes, Mr. Knox, Mr. De Baron, and the heir went away, leaving the family to adjust their own affairs in their new position. Then Mary received a third lecture as she sat leaning upon her husband's shoulder.

"At any rate, you won't have to go away any more," she had said to him. "You have been always away, for ever so long."

"It was you who would go to the Deanery when you left London."

"I know that. Of course I wanted to see papa then. I don't want to talk about that any more. Only you won't go away again?"

"When I do you shall go with me."

"That won't be going away. Going away is taking yourself off—by yourself."

"Could I help it?"

"I don't know. I could have gone with you. But it's over now, isn't it?"

"I hope so."

"It shall be over. And when this other trouble is done—you'll go to London then?"

"It will depend on your health, dear."

"I am very well. Why shouldn't I be well? When a month is over—then you'll go."

"In two months, perhaps."

"That'll be the middle of June. I'm sure I shall be well in three weeks. And where shall we go? We'll go to Munster Court—shan't we?"

"As soon as the house is ready in St. James's Square, we must go there."

"Oh, George, I do so hate that house in St. James's Square. I shall never be happy there. It's like a prison."

Then he gave her his lecture. "My love, you should not talk of hating things that are necessary."

"But why is St. James's Square necessary?"

"Because it is the town residence belonging to the family. Munster Court was very well for us as we were before. Indeed, it was much too good, as I felt every hour that I was there. It was more than we could afford without drawing upon your father for assistance."

"But he likes being drawn upon," said Mary. "I don't think there is anything papa likes so much as to be drawn upon."

"That could make no difference to me, my dear. I don't think that as yet you understand money matters."

"I hope I never shall, then."

"I hope you will. It will be your duty to do so. But, as I was saying, the house at Munster Court will be unsuitable to you as Lady Brotherton." On hearing this Mary pouted and made a grimace. "There is a dignity to be borne which, though it may be onerous, must be supported."

"I hate dignity."

"You would not say that if you knew how it vexed me. Could I have chosen for myself personally, perhaps, neither would I have taken this

position. I do not think that I am by nature ambitious. But a man is bound to do his duty in that position in which he finds himself placed—and so is a woman.”

“And it will be my duty to live in an ugly house?”

“Perhaps the house may be made less ugly; but to live in it will certainly be a part of your duty. And if you love me, Mary——”

“Do you want me to tell you whether I love you?”

“But, loving me as I know you do, I am sure you will not neglect your duty. Do not say again that you hate your dignity. You must never forget now that you are Marchioness of Brotherton.”

“I never shall, George.”

“That is right, my dear,” he said, omitting to understand the little satire conveyed in her words. “It will come easy to you before long. But I would have all the world feel that you are the mistress of the rank to which you have been raised. Of course, it has been different hitherto,” he said, endeavouring in his own mind to excuse the indiscretion of that Kappa-kappa. This lecture also she turned to wholesome food and digested, obtaining from it some strength and throwing off the bombast by which a weaker mind might have been inflated. She understood, at any rate, that St. James’s Square must be her doom; but while acknowledging this to herself, she made a little resolution that a good deal would have to be done to the house before it was ready

for her reception, and that the doing would require a considerable time.

When she heard the purport of the late lord's will she was much surprised—more surprised, probably, than Jack himself. Why should a man who was so universally bad—such a horror—leave his money to one who was so—so—so good as Jack De Baron. The epithet came to her at last in preference to any other. And what would he do now? George had told her that the sum would be very large, and of course he could marry if he pleased. At any rate he would not go to Perim. The idea that he should go to Perim had made her uncomfortable. Perhaps he had better marry Guss Mildmay. She was not quite all that his wife should be; but he had said that he would do so in certain circumstances. Those circumstances had come round, and it was right that he should keep his word. And yet it made her somewhat melancholy to think that he should marry Guss Mildmay.

Very shortly after this, and when she was becoming aware that the event which ought to have taken place on the 1st of April would not be much longer delayed, there came home to her various things containing lectures almost as severe and perhaps more eloquent than those she had received from her sister-in-law, her father, and her husband. There was an infinity of clothes which someone had ordered for her, and on all the things which would bear a mark there was a coronet. The coronets on the pocket-handkerchiefs seemed to be without end. And there was funereal note-paper, on which the

black edges were not more visible than the black coronets. And there came invoices to her from the tradesmen, addressed to the Marchioness of Brotherton. And then there came the first letter from her father with her rank and title on the envelope. At first she was almost afraid to open it.

CHAPTER XXI.

At last, not more than a week after the death of the old Marchioness, the new Marchioness was born. For it was a boy, the new Marchioness, who had for some time past been anticipated to the house of Brotherton, now united; and Fortune, who had been good to the new Marchioness, continued true to his step in this. The family had a new heir, a real Marchioness, and the old Marchioness, when the baby was shown to her, for a while forgot her sorrows and triumphed with the rest.

The Dean's anxiety had been so great that he had insisted on remaining in the house. It had been found impossible to refuse such a request made at such a time. And now, at last, the ladies at Manor Cross gradually forgave the Dean; his officers. To the old dowager they did not mention his name, and she probably forgot his existence; but the Marchioness appeared to live with him on terms of perfect friendship, and the sisters succeeded to the circumstances and allowed themselves to talk to

CHAPTER XXI.

Popenjoy is Born—and Christened.

AT last, not much above a week after the calculations, in all the glory of the purple of Manor Cross, the new Popenjoy was born. For it was a Popenjoy. The Fates, who had for some time past been unpropitious to the house of Brotherton, now smiled; and Fortune, who had been good to the Dean throughout, remained true to him also in this. The family had a new heir, a real Popenjoy; and the old Marchioness, when the baby was shown to her, for awhile forgot her sorrows and triumphed with the rest.

The Dean's anxiety had been so great that he had insisted on remaining at the house. It had been found impossible to refuse such a request made at such a time. And now, at last, the ladies at Manor Cross gradually forgave the Dean his offences. To the old dowager they did not mention his name, and she probably forgot his existence; but the Marquis appeared to live with him on terms of perfect friendship, and the sisters succumbed to the circumstances and allowed themselves to talk to

him as though he were in truth the father of the reigning Marchioness.

It will be understood that for forty-eight hours before the birth of the child and for forty-eight hours afterwards all Manor Cross was moved in the matter, as though this were the first male child born into the world since the installation of some new golden age. It was a great thing that, after all the recent troubles, a Popenjoy—a proper Popenjoy—should be born at Manor Cross of English parents—a healthy boy—a bouncing little lord, as Mrs. Toff called him; and the event almost justified the prophetic spirit in which his grandmother spoke of this new advent. “Little angel!” she said. “I know he’ll grow up to bring new honours to the family, and do as much for it as his great-grandfather.” The great-grandfather spoken of had been an earl, great in borough-mongery, and had been made a Marquis by Pitt on the score of his votes. “George,” she went on to say, “I do hope there will be bells and bonfires, and that the tenants will be allowed to see him.” There were bells and bonfires. But in these days tenants are perhaps busier men than formerly, and have less in them certainly of the spirit of heir-worship than their fathers. But Mr. Price, with his bride, did come down and see the baby; on which occasion the gallant husband bade his wife remember that although they had been married more than twelve months after Lord George, their baby would only be three months younger. Whereupon Mrs. Price boxed her husband’s ears—to the great delight of Mrs. Toff, who was dis-

pensing sherry and cherry brandy in her own sitting-room.

The Dean's joy, though less ecstatic in its expression, was quite as deep and quite as triumphant as that of the Marchioness. When he was admitted for a moment to his daughter's bedside, the tears rolled down his face as he prayed for a blessing for her and her baby. Lady Sarah was in the room, and began to doubt whether she had read the man's character aright. There was an ineffable tenderness about him, a sweetness of manner, a low melody of voice, a gracious solemnity in which piety seemed to be mingled with his love and happiness! That he was an affectionate father had been always known; but now it had to be confessed that he bore himself as though he had sprung from some noble family or been the son and grandson of archbishops. How it would have been with him on such an occasion had his daughter married some vicar of Pugsty, as she had herself once suggested, Lady Sarah did not now stop to inquire. It was reasonable to Lady Sarah that the coming of a Popenjoy should be hailed with greater joy and receive a warmer welcome than the birth of any ordinary baby. "You have had a great deal to bear, Brotherton," he said, holding his noble son-in-law by the hand; "but I think that this will compensate for it all." The tears were still in his eyes, and they were true tears—tears of most unaffected joy. He had seen the happy day; and as he told himself in words which would have been profane had they been absolutely uttered, he was now ready to die in

peace. Not that he meant to die, or thought that he should die. That vision of young Popenjoy, bright as a star, beautiful as a young Apollo, with all the golden glories of the aristocracy upon his head, standing up in the House of Commons and speaking to the world at large with modest but assured eloquence, while he himself occupied some corner in the gallery, was still before his eyes.

After all, who shall say that the man was selfish? He was contented to shine with a reflected honour. Though he was wealthy, he never desired grand doings at the Deanery. In his own habits he was simple. The happiness of his life had been to see his daughter happy. His very soul had smiled within him when she had smiled in his presence. But he had been subject to one weakness, which had marred a manliness which would otherwise have been great. He, who should have been proud of the lowliness of his birth, and have known that the brightest feather in his cap was the fact that having been humbly born he had made himself what he was—he had never ceased to be ashamed of the stable-yard. And as he felt himself to be degraded by that from which he had sprung, so did he think that the only whitewash against such dirt was to be found in the aggrandisement of his daughter and the nobility of her children. He had, perhaps, been happier than he deserved. He might have sold her to some lord who would have scorned her after awhile and despised himself. As it was, the Marquis who was his son-in-law was a man whom, upon the whole, he could well trust. Lord George had in-

deed made one little error in regard to Mrs. Houghton; but that had passed away, and would not probably be repeated.

Of all those closely concerned in the coming of Popenjoy the father seemed to bear the greatness of the occasion with the most modesty. When the Dean congratulated him, he simply smiled and expressed a hope that Mary would do well in her troubles. Poor Mary's welfare had hitherto been almost lost in the solicitude for her son. "She can't but do well now," said the Dean, who of all men was the most sanguine. "She is thoroughly healthy, and nothing has been amiss."

"We must be very careful—that's all," said the Marquis. Hitherto he had not brought his tongue to speak of his son as Popenjoy, and did not do so for many a day to come. That an heir had been born was very well; but of late the name of Popenjoy had not been sweet to his ears.

Nothing had gone amiss, and nothing did go amiss. When it was decided that the young Marchioness was to nurse her own baby—a matter which Mary took into her own hands with a very high tone—the old Marchioness became again a little troublesome. She had her memories about it all in her own time; how she had not been able to do as Mary was doing. She remembered all that, and how unhappy it had made her; but she remembered also that, had she done so for Popenjoy, Sir Henry would have insisted on three pints of porter. Then Mary rebelled altogether, and talked of drinking nothing but tea—and would not be

brought to consent even to bitter beer without a great deal of trouble. But, through it all, the mother throve and the baby throve; and when the bonfires had been all burned and the bells had been all rung, and the child had been shown to such tenants and adherents and workmen as desired to see him, the family settled down to a feeling of permanent satisfaction.

And then came the christening. Now in spite of the permanent satisfaction there were troubles—troubles of which the Marquis became conscious very soon, and which he was bound to communicate to his sister—troubles of which the Dean was unfortunately cognisant, and of which he would speak and with which he would concern himself—much to the annoyance of the Marquis. The will which the late man had made was a serious temporary embarrassment. There was no money with which to do anything. The very bed on which the mother lay with her baby belonged to Jack De Baron. They were absolutely drinking Jack De Baron's port-wine, and found, when the matter came to be considered, that they were making butter from Jack De Baron's cows. This could not be long endured. Jack, who was now bound to have a lawyer of his own, had very speedily signified his desire that the family should be put to no inconvenience, and had declared that any suggestion from the Marquis as to the house in town or that in the country would be a law to him. But it was necessary that everything should be valued at once, and either purchased or given up to be sold to those who would purchase

it. There was, however, no money, and the Marquis, who hated the idea of borrowing, was told that he must go among the money-lenders. Then the Dean proposed that he and Miss Tallowax between them might be able to advance what was needed. The Marquis shook his head and said nothing. The proposition had been very distasteful to him.

Then there came another proposition. But it will be right, in the first place, to explain that the great question of godfather and godmother had received much attention. His Royal Highness the Duke of Windsor had signified through young Lord Brabazon that he would stand as one of the sponsors. The honour had been very great, and had of course been accepted at the moment. The Dean had hankered much after the office, but had abstained from asking with a feeling that, should the request be refused, a coolness would be engendered which he himself would be unable to repress. It would have filled him with delight to stand in his own cathedral as godfather to the little Popenjoy; but he abstained, and soon heard that the Duke of Dunstable, who was a distant cousin, was to be the colleague of His Royal Highness. He smiled and said nothing of himself—but thought that his liberality might have been more liberally remembered..

Just at this time Miss Tallowax arrived at the Deanery, and on the next morning the Dean came over to Manor Cross with a proposition from that lady. She would bestow twenty thousand pounds

immediately upon Popenjoy, and place it for instant use in the father's hands, on condition that she might be allowed to stand as godmother!

"We could not consent to accept the money," said the Marquis very gravely.

"Why not? Mary is her nearest living relative in that generation. As a matter of course she will leave her money to Mary or her children—unless she be offended. Nothing is so common as for old people with liberal hearts to give away the money which they must soon leave behind them. A more generous creature than my old aunt doesn't live."

"Very generous; but I am afraid we cannot accept it."

"After all, it is only an empty honour. I would not ask it for myself, because I knew how you might be situated. But I really think you might gratify the old lady. Twenty thousand pounds is an important sum, and would be so useful just at present!"

This was true, but the father at the moment declined. The Dean, however, who knew his man, determined that the money should not be lost, and communicated with Mr. Knox. Mr. Knox came down to Manor Cross and held a long consultation at which both the Dean and Lady Sarah were present. "Let it be granted," said the Dean, "that it is a foolish request; but are you justified in refusing twenty thousand pounds offered to Popenjoy?"

"Certainly," said Lady Sarah, "if the twenty thousand pounds is a bribe."

"But it is no bribe, Lady Sarah," said Mr. Knox. "It is not unreasonable that Miss Tallowax should give her money to her great-nephew, nor is it unreasonable that she should ask for this honour, seeing that she is the child's great-aunt." There was a strong opposition to Miss Tallowax's liberal offer—but in the end it was accepted. The twenty thousand pounds was important, and after all the godmother could do no lasting injury to the child. Then it was discovered that the offer was clogged with a further stipulation. The boy must be christened Tallowax! To this father and mother and aunts all objected, swearing that they would not subject their young Popenjoy to so great an injury—till it was ascertained that the old lady did not insist on Tallowax as a first name, or even as a second. It would suffice that Tallowax should be inserted among others. It was at last decided that the boy should be christened Frederic Augustus Tallowax. Thus he became Frederic Augustus Tallowax Germain—commonly to be called, by the Queen's courtesy, Lord Popenjoy. The christening itself was not very august, as neither the Royal Duke nor his fellow-sponsor attended in person. The Dean stood proxy for the one, and Canon Holdenough for the other.

Mary by this time was able to leave her room, and was urgent with her husband to take her up to London. Had she not been very good, and done

all that she was told — except in regard to the porter? And was it not manifest to everybody that she would be able to travel to St. Petersburg and back if such a journey were required? Her husband assured her that she would be knocked up before she got half way. "But London isn't a tenth part of the distance," said Mary, with a woman's logic. Then it was settled that on the 20th of May she should be taken with her baby to Munster Court. The following are a few of the letters of congratulation which she received during the period of her convalescence.

"Grosvenor Place.

"MY DEAR MARCHIONESS, — Of course I have heard all about you from time to time, and of course I have been delighted. In the first place, we none of us could grieve very much for that unfortunate brother of yours. Really it was so very much better for everybody that Lord George should have the title and property—not to talk of all the advantage which the world expects from a young and fascinating Lady Brotherton. I am told that the scaffolding is already up in St. James's Square. I drove through the place the other day, and be-thought myself how long it might be before I should receive the honour of a card telling me that on such and such a day the Marchioness of Brotherton would be at home. I should not suggest such a thing but for a dearly-kind expression in your last letter.

“But the baby of course is the first object. Pray tell me what sort of a baby it is. Two arms and two legs, I know, for even a young Popenjoy is not allowed to have more; but of his special graces you might send me a catalogue, if you have as yet been allowed pen and paper. I can believe that a good deal of mild tyranny would go on with those estimable sisters, and that Lord George would be anxious. I beg his pardon—the Marquis. Don’t you find this second change in your name very perplexing—particularly in regard to your linen? All your nice wedding things will have become wrong so soon!

“And now I can impart a secret. There are promises of a little Gibleet. Of course it is premature to speak with certainty; but why shouldn’t there be a little Gibleet as well as a little Popenjoy? Only it won’t be a Gibleet as long as dear old Lord Gossling can keep the gout out of his stomach. They say that in anger at his son’s marriage he has forsworn champagne and confines himself to two bottles of claret a day. But Gibleet, who is the happiest young man of my acquaintance, says that his wife is worth it all.

“And so our friend the Captain is a millionaire! What will he do? Wasn’t it an odd will? I couldn’t be altogether sorry, for I have a little corner in my heart for the Captain, and would have left him something myself if I had anything to leave. I really think he had better marry his old love. I like justice, and that would be just. He would do

it to-morrow if you told him. It might take me a month of hard work. How much is it he gets? I hear such various sums—from a hundred thousand down to as many hundreds. Nevertheless, the will proves the man to have been mad—as I always said he was.

“I suppose you’ll come to Munster Court till the house in the square be finished. Or will you take some furnished place for a month or two? Munster Court is small; but it was very pretty, and I hope I may see it again.

“Kiss the little Popenjoy for me, and believe me to be,

“Dear Lady Brotherton,

“Your affectionate old friend,

“G. MONTACUTE JONES.”

The next was from their friend the Captain himself:

“DEAR LADY BROTHERTON,—I hope it won’t be wrong in me to congratulate you on the birth of your baby. I do so with all my heart. I hope that some day, when I am an old fogey, I may be allowed to know him and remind him that in old days I used to know his mother. I was down at Manor Cross the other day; but of course on such an occasion I could not see you. I was sent for because of that strange will; but it was more strange to me that I should so soon find myself

in your house. It was not very bright on that occasion.

"I wonder who was surprised most by the will—you or I?" [Mary, when she read this, declared to herself that she ought not to have been surprised at all. How could anyone be surprised by what such a man as that might do?] "He had never seen me, as far as I know, till he met me at Rudham. I did not want his money—though I was poor enough. I don't know what I shall do now; but I shan't go to Perim.

"Mrs. Jones says you will soon be in town. I hope I may be allowed to call.

"Believe me always,

"Most sincerely yours,

"JOHN DE BARON."

Both those letters gave her pleasure, and both she answered. To all Mrs. Jones's inquiries she gave very full replies, and enjoyed her jokes with her old friend. She hinted that she did not at all intend to hurry the men at St. James's Square, and that certainly she would be found in Munster Court till the men had completed their work. As to what their young friend would do with his money, she could say nothing. She could not undertake the commission—though that perhaps might be best—and so on. Her note to Jack was very short. She thanked him heartily for his good wishes, and told him the day on which she would be in Munster Court. Then in a postscript she said that she was

"very, very glad," that he had inherited the late lord's money.

The other letter offended her as much as those two had pleased her. It offended her so much that when she saw the handwriting she would not have read it but that curiosity forbade her to put it on one side. It was from Adelaide Houghton, and as she opened it there was a sparkle of anger in her eyes which perhaps none of her friends had ever seen there. This letter was as follows:

"DEAR LADY BROTHERTON, — Will you not at length allow bygones to be bygones? What can a poor woman do more than beg pardon and promise never to be naughty again. Is it worth while that we, who have known each other so long, should quarrel about what really amounted to nothing? It was but a little foolish romance, the echo of a past feeling—a folly if you will, but innocent. I own my fault and put on the sackcloth and ashes of confession, and, after that, surely you will give me absolution.

"And now, having made my apology, which I trust will be accepted, pray let me congratulate you on all your happiness. The death of your poor brother-in-law of course we have all expected. Mr. Houghton had heard a month before that it was impossible that he should live. Of course, we all feel that the property has fallen into much better hands. And I am so glad that you have a boy. Dear little Popenjoy! Do, do forgive me, so that I

may have an opportunity of kissing him. I am, at any rate,

“Your affectionate old friend,
“ADELAIDE HOUGHTON.”

Affectionate old friend! Serpent! Toad! Nasty, degraded, painted Jezebel! Forgive her! No—never; not though she were on her knees! She was contemptible before, but doubly contemptible in that she could humble herself to make an apology so false, so feeble, and so fawning. It was thus that she regarded her correspondent's letter. Could any woman who knew that love-letters had been written to her husband by another woman forgive that other? We are all conscious of trespassers against ourselves whom we especially bar when we say our prayers. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us—excepting Jones, who has committed the one sin that we will not forgive, that we ought not to forgive. Is there not that sin against the Holy Ghost to justify us? This was the sin that Mary could not forgive. The disgusting woman—for to Mary the woman was now absolutely disgusting—had attempted to take from her the heart of her husband! There was a good deal of evidence also against her husband, but that she had quite forgotten. She did not in the least believe that Adelaide was preferred to herself. Her husband had eyes, and could see—a heart, and could feel—an understanding, and could perceive. She was not in the least afraid as to her husband. But nothing on earth should induce her to forgive

Mrs. Houghton. She thought for a moment whether it was worth her while to show the letter to the Marquis, and then tore it into fragments and threw the pieces away.

CHAPTER XXII.

Conclusion.

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astonishes her most is the perfect friendship which exists between her and her eldest sister-in-law. She corresponds regularly with Lady Sarah, and is quite content to have her letters filled with the many ailments and scanty comforts of the poor people on the estate. Lady Sarah is more than content to be able to love the mother of the heir, and she does love her, and the boy too, with all her heart. Now that there is a Popenjoy—a coming Brotherton, of whom she can be proud—she finds nothing in her own life with which she ought to quarrel. The Ladies Susanna and Amelia also come up to town every year, very greatly to their satisfaction, and are most devoted to the young Marchioness. But the one guest who is honoured above all others in St. James's Square, for whose comfort everything is made to give way, whom not to treat with loving respect is to secure a banishment from the house, whom all the servants are made to regard as a second master, is the Dean. His lines have certainly fallen to him in pleasant places. No woman in London is more courted and more popular than the Marchioness of Brotherton, and consequently the Dean spends his two months in London very comfortably. But perhaps the happiest period of his life is the return visit which his daughter always makes to him for a fortnight during the winter. At this period the Marquis will generally pass a couple of days at the Deanery, but for the greater part of the time the father and daughter are alone together. Then he almost worships her. Up in London he allows himself to be worshipped with an exquisite

grace. To Mrs. Houghton the Marchioness has never spoken, and on that subject she is inexorable. Friends have interceded, but such intercession has only made matters worse. Of what nature must the woman be who could speak to any friend of such an offence as she had committed? The Marchioness, in refusing to be reconciled, has never alluded to the cause of her anger, but has shown her anger plainly and has persistently refused to abandon it.

The Marquis has become a model member of the House of Lords. He is present at all their sittings, and is indefatigably patient on committees—but very rarely speaks. In this way he is gradually gaining weight in the country, and when his hair is quite gray and his step less firm than at present he will be an authority in Parliament. He is also a pattern landlord, listening to all complaints, and endeavouring in everything to do justice between himself and those who are dependent on him. He is also a pattern father, expecting great things from Popenjoy, and resolving that the child shall be subjected to proper discipline as soon as he is transferred from feminine to virile teaching. In the meantime the Marchioness reigns supreme in the nursery—as it is proper that she should do.

The husband now never feels himself called upon to remind his wife to support her dignity. Since the dancing of the Kappa-kappa she has never danced, except when, on grand occasions, she had walked through a quadrille with some selected partner of special rank; and this she does simply as a duty. Nevertheless, in society she is very gay and very

joyous. But dancing has been a peril to her, and she avoids it altogether, pleading to such friends as Mrs. Jones that a woman with a lot of babies is out of place capering about a room. Mrs. Jones remembers the Kappa-kappa, and says little or nothing on the subject, but she heartily dissents from her friend, and still hopes that there may be a good time coming. The Marquis remembers it all too, and is thoroughly thankful to his wife, showing his gratitude every now and then by suggesting that Captain and Mrs. De Baron may be asked to dinner. He knows that there is much for which he has to be grateful. Though the name of Mrs. Houghton is never on his tongue, he had not forgotten the way in which he went astray in Berkeley Square—nor the sweet reticence of his wife, who has never thrown his fault in his teeth since that day on which, at his bidding, she took the letter from his pocket and read it. No man in London is better satisfied with his wife than the Marquis, and perhaps no man in London has better cause to be satisfied.

Yes! Captain De Baron—and his wife—do occasionally dine together in St. James's Square. Whether it was that Mrs. Montacute Jones was successful in her efforts, or that Guss was enabled to find arguments on Jack's wealth which Jack was unable to oppose, or that a sense of what was due to the lady prevailed with him at last, he did marry her about a twelvemonth after the reading of the will. When the Marchioness came to town—before Popenjoy was born—he called, and was allowed to see her. Nothing could be more respectful than was

his demeanour then, nor than it had been ever since; and when he announced to his friend, as he did in person, that he was about to be married to Miss Mildmay, she congratulated him with warmth, not saying a word as to past occurrences. But she determined that she would ever be his friend, and for his sake she has become friendly also to his wife. She never really liked poor Guss—nor perhaps does the Captain. But there have been no quarrels, at any rate no public quarrels, and Jack has done his duty in a manner that rather surprised his old acquaintances. But he is a much altered man, and is growing fat, and has taken to playing whist at his club before dinner for shilling points. I have always thought that in his heart of hearts he regrets the legacy.

Whether to spite his son, or at the urgent entreaty of his wife and doctors, Lord Gossling has of late been so careful that the gout has not had a chance of getting into his stomach. Lord Giblett professes himself to be perfectly satisfied with things as they are. He has already four children. He lives in a small house in Green Street, and is a member of the Entomological Society. He is so strict in his attendance that it is thought that he will some day be president. But the old lord does not like this turn in his son's life, and says that the family of De Geese must be going to the dogs when the heir has nothing better to do than to attend to insects.

Mrs. Montacute Jones gives as many parties as ever in Grosvenor Place, and is never so well pleased

as when she can get the Marchioness of Brotherton to her house. She is still engaged in matrimonial pursuits, and is at the present moment full of an idea that the Minister from Saxony, who is a fine old gentleman of sixty, but a bachelor, may be got to marry Lady Amelia Germain. Mary assures her that there isn't the least chance—that Amelia would certainly not accept him—and that an old German of sixty, used to diplomacy all his life, is the last man in the world to be led into difficulties. But Mrs. Jones never gives way in such matters, and has already made the plans for a campaign at Killan-codlem next August.

I regret to state that Messrs. Snape and Cashett have persecuted the poor Baroness most cruelly. They have contrived to show that the lady has not only got into their debt, but has also swindled them—swindled them according to law—and consequently they have been able to set all the police of the Continent on her track. She had no sooner shown her face back in Germany than they were upon her. For awhile she escaped, rushing from one country to another, but at last she was arrested on a platform in Oregon, and is soon about to stand her trial in an English court. As a good deal of sympathy has been expressed in her favour, and as Mr. Philogunac Cœlebs has taken upon himself the expense of her defence, it is confidently hoped in many quarters that no jury will convict her. In the meantime, Dr. Fleabody has, I am told, married a storekeeper in New York, and has settled down into a good mother of a family.

At Manor Cross during the greater portion of the year things go on very much as they used. The Marchioness is still living, and interests herself chiefly in the children of her daughter-in-law—born, and to be born. But the great days of her life are those in which Popenjoy is brought to her. The young scapegrace will never stay above five minutes with his grandmother, but the old lady is sure that she is regarded by him with a love passing the love of children. At Christmas time, and for a week or two before, and a month or two afterwards, the house is full of company and bright with unaccustomed lights. Lady Sarah puts on her newest silk, and the Marchioness allows herself to be brought into the drawing-room after dinner. But at the end of February the young family flits to town, and then the Manor Cross is as Manor Cross so long has been.

Mr. Price still hunts, and is as popular in the county as ever. He often boasts that although he was married much after the Marquis, the youngest of his three children is older than Lady Mary. But when he does this at home, his ears are always boxed for him.

Of Mr. Groschut it is only necessary to say that he is still at Pugsty, vexing the souls of his parishioners by Sabbatical denunciations.

THE END.

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April



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L.M. Alcott: Little Women 2 v.

"All for Greed," Author of—All for Greed 1 v. Love the Avenger 2 v.

Lizzie Alldridge: By Love and Law 2 v.

Miss Austen: Sense and Sensibility 1 v. Mansfield Park 1 v.

Pride and Prejudice 1 v. Northanger Abbey, and Persuasion 1 v. Emma 1 v.

Nina Balatka 1 v.

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Rev. R. H. Baynes: Lyra Anglicana, Hymns & Sacred Songs 1 v.

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Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë): Jane Eyre 2 v. Shirley 2 v. Villette 2 v. The Professor 1 v.

Ellis & Acton Bell: Wuthering Heights, and Agnes Grey 2 v.

Frank Lee Benedict: St. Simon's Niece 2 v.

William Black: A Daughter of Heth 2 v. In Silk Attire 2 v. The strange Adventures of a Phaeton 2 v. A Princess of Thule 2 v. Kilmeny 1 v. The Maid of Killeena 1 v. Three Feathers 2 v. Lady Silverdale's Sweetheart 1 v. Madcap Violet 2 v. Green Pastures and Piccadilly 2 v.

R. D. Blackmore: Alice Lorraine 2 v.

Isa Blagden: The Woman I loved, and the Woman who loved me; A Tuscan Wedding 1 v.

Lady Blessington: Meredith 1 v. Strathern 2 v. Memoirs of a Femme de Chambre 1 v. Marmaduke Herbert 2 v. Country Quarters (w. portrait) 2 v.

Miss Braddon: Lady Audley's Secret 2 v. Aurora Floyd 2 v. Eleanor's Victory 2 v. John Marchmont's Legacy 2 v. Henry Dunbar 2 v. The Doctor's Wife 2 v. Only a Clod 2 v. Sir Jas-

per's Tenant 2 v. The Lady's Mile 2 v. Rupert Godwin 2 v. Dead-Sea Fruit 2 v. Run to Earth 2 v. Fenton's Quest 2 v. The Lovels of Arden 2 v. Strangers and Pilgrims 2 v. Lucius Davoren 3 v. Taken at the Flood 3 v. Lost for Love 2 v. A Strange World 2 v. Hostages to Fortune 2 v. Dead Men's Shoes 2 v. Joshua Haggard's Daughter 2 v. Weavers and Weft 1 v. In Great Waters 1 v. An Open Verdict 3 v.

Shirley Brooks: The Silver Cord 3 v. Sooner or Later 3 v.

Miss Rhoda Broughton: Cometh up as a Flower 1 v. Not wisely, but too well 2 v. Red as a Rose is She 2 v. Tales for Christmas Eve 1 v. Nancy 2 v. Joan 2 v.

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upon Wheels 2 v.

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Twenty 2 v. A Fight with Fortune 2 v.

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1 v. Hide and Seek 2 v. A Plot in
Private Life 1 v. The Woman in
White 2 v. Basil 1 v. No Name
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tonina 2 v. Armadale 3 v. The
Moonstone 2 v. Man and Wife 3 v.
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Frozen Deep 1 v. The Law and the
Lady 2 v. The Two Destinies 1 v.
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"Cometh up as a Flower,"
Author of— *vide* Broughton.

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(w. portrait) 1 v. The two Ad-
mirals 1 v. The Jack O'Lantern 1 v.

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band 1 v. Romantic Tales 1 v.
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Maid 1 v. The Ogilvies 1 v. Lord
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Marriages 1 v. Studies from Life
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Fair France 1 v. My Mother and
I 1 v. The Little Lame Prince 1 v.

Sermons out of Church 1 v. The
Laurel Bush 1 v.

Miss Georgiana Craik: Lost
and Won 1 v. Faith Unwin's Ordeal
1 v. Leslie Tyrrell 1 v. Winifred's
Wooing, and other Tales 1 v. Mildred
1 v. Esther Hill's Secret 2 v. Hero
Trevelyan 1 v. Without Kith or Kin
2 v. Only a Butterfly 1 v. Sylvia's
Choice; Theresa 2 v. Anne Warwick
1 v. Two Tales of Married Life 2 v.
Vol. I. Hard to Bear, Vol. II. *vide*
M. C. Stirling.

Miss Cummins: The Lamp-
lighter 1 v. Mabel Vaughan 1 v. El
Fureidîs 1 v. Haunted Hearts 1 v.

"Daily News," War Corre-
spondence 1877 by A. Forbes
etc. 3 v.

De-Foe: Robinson Crusoe 1 v.

Charles Dickens: The Post-
humous Papers of the Pickwick
Club (w. portrait) 2 v. American
Notes 1 v. Oliver Twist 1 v. The
Life and Adventures of Nicholas
Nickleby 2 v. Sketches 1 v. The
Life and Adventures of Martin
Chuzzlewit 2 v. A Christmas
Carol; the Chimes; the Cricket
on the Hearth 1 v. Master Hum-
phrey's Clock (Old Curiosity
Shop, Barnaby Rudge, and other
Tales) 3 v. Pictures from Italy 1 v.
The Battle of Life; the Haunted
Man 1 v. Dombey and Son 3 v.
David Copperfield 3 v. Bleak
House 4 v. A Child's History
of England (2 v. 8° M. 2, 70.)
Hard Times 1 v. Little Dorrit
4 v. A Tale of two Cities 2 v.
Hunted Down; The Uncom-
mercial Traveller 1 v. Great
Expectations 2 v. Christmas
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4 v. Somebody's Luggage; Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings; Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy 1 v. Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions; Mugby Junction 1 v. No Thoroughfare 1 v. The Mystery of Edwin Drood 2 v.

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"Found Dead," Author of—*vide* James Payn.

Frank Fairleigh 2 v.

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Miss Grant: Victor Lescar 2 v. The Sun-Maid 2 v.

W. A. Baillie Grohman: Tyrol and the Tyrolese 1 v.

"Guy Livingstone," Author of—Guy Livingstone 1 v. Sword and Gown 1 v. Barren Honour 1 v. Border and Bastille 1 v. Maurice Dering 1 v. Sans Merci 2 v. Breaking a Butterfly 2 v. Anteros 2 v. Hagarene 2 v.

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"Heir of Redclyffe," Author of—*vide* Yonge.

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Jean Ingelow: Off the Skelligs 3 v. Poems 2 v. Fated to be Free 2 v.

Washington Irving: Sketch Book (w. portrait) 1 v. Life of Mahomet 1 v. Successors of Mahomet 1 v. Oliver Goldsmith 1 v. Chronicles of Wolfert's Roost 1 v. Life of George Washington 5 v.

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vide Mrs. Craik.

Johnson: The Lives of the
English Poets 2 v.

Emily Jolly: Colonel Dacre 2 v.

"Joshua Davidson," Author
of—*vide* E. Lynn Linton.

Miss Kavanagh: Nathalie 2 v.
Daisy Burns 2 v. Grace Lee 2 v.
Rachel Gray 1 v. Adèle 3 v. A Sum-
mer and Winter in the Two Sicilies 2 v.
Seven Years 2 v. French Women of
Letters 1 v. English Women of Letters
1 v. Queen Mab 2 v. Beatrice 2 v.
Sybil's Second Love 2 v. Dora 2 v.
Silvia 2 v. Bessie 2 v. John Dorrien
3 v. Two Lilies 2 v.

Annie Keary: Oldbury 2 v.
Castle Daly 2 v.

Kempis: *vide* Thomas a
Kempis.

R. B. Kimball: Saint Leger
1 v. Romance of Student Life
abroad 1 v. Undercurrents 1 v.
Was he Successful? 1 v. To-Day
in New-York 1 v.

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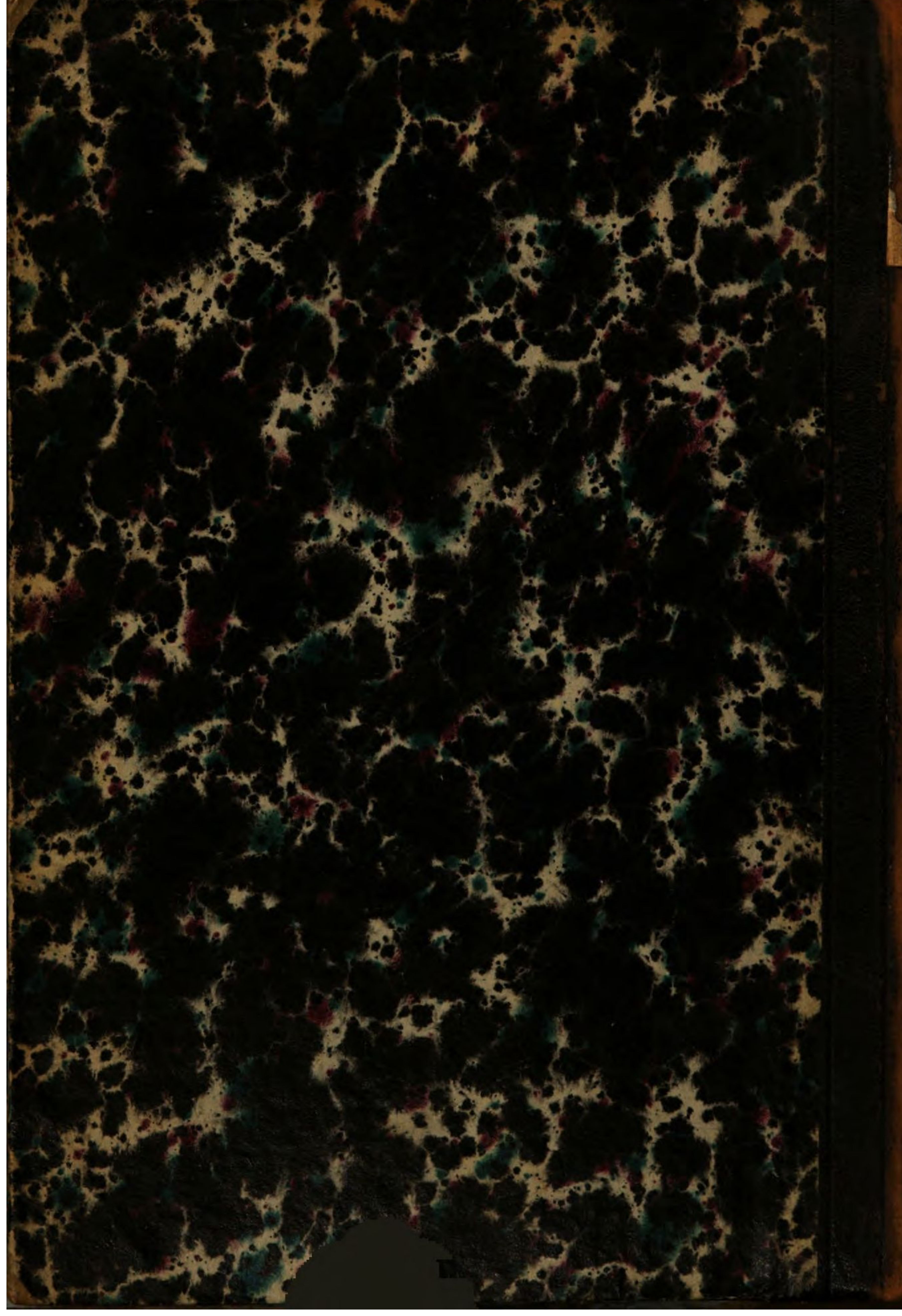
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